

# Dr. Annie Besant

FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

**Dr. SAVITA NIGAM**



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**Dr Annie Besant**  
**(1847-1933)**

***President—Indian National Congress (1917)***





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In preparation of this work I am heartily indebted to my respected supervisor and a scholar of repute, Prof. Mahesh Vikram Singh, who in spite of his own busy schedules, evinced great interest and gave top priority to its early completion. My research topic "The role and Contributions of Dr. Annie Besant in Freedom Movement" itself has been suggested by my learned supervisor.

Dr. Annie Besant is one of the rare global personalities of the 20th century who had lived and died for the liberation of mankind. Despite many research works in the aspect of her life, still there is need to know more about Dr. Annie Besant. And so, I have undertaken this work on Dr. Annie

Besant—her contribution to our freedom movement, education, social welfare and women's upliftment. In this challenging work, respected Prof. Raghvendra Panthari, Head, Dept. of History and Prof. Aziz Halder, Dean, Faculty of Humanities have supported me a lot. Without their blessing it could not have been completed. I am also greatly indebted to Prof. Permanand Singh and other honourable teachers for their interest and valuable suggestions which were of tremendous help. I am thankful to Dr. R.J. Vishwakarma, Benaras Hindu University for his help in bringing out this research work and to Shri T.A.B. Pashupathi for his editorial support. I am also grateful to Dr. J.N. Dubey, Dr. Satish Chandra and Shri Rajan Parasher, for their help and moral support.

**Dr. Savita Nigam**



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**FOREWORD**

Dr. Savita Nigam has done a marvelous job to bring out his book of one of the first & foremost, foreign ladies who served India and its cause of freedom in many ways. She is considered as a great reformer and theosophist who advocated the free thought & Socialism and spearheaded the movement of theosophy in 1889, headed by the colourful & controversial madam Blavtsky in 1889. The purpose of the movement on Dr. Nigam points out was elevating the materialistic, scientific spirit on the west though preaching the mysticism & spirituality of Hinduism and Buddhism. She came to India in 1893 and served as president of the Theosophical society from 1907 Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Jainism & other religious thoroughly here & toured Indian extensively.

She was a great scholar who learnt Sankrit language & translated Bhagwad Gita and as an to prepare clerks, instead of developing character & morality. Women's education was neglected patriotism was suppressed. The

destiny of India & Indians were determined by Britishers & economic exploitation was the order of the day & welfare of Indian people was totally ignored.

Dr. Nigam has further categorically brought out the enormity of her work & services rendered in the field of national awakening and freedom struggle. Her role in this field was of paramount Importance.

In this context she founded the Indian Home rule league in 1916, an institute established for helping the cause of freedom which played a very important role of kindling the light of freedom.

Dr. Nigam has also portrayed her personal life before & after coming to India which was full of turbulence & turmoil with all kind of accolades & criticism from different corners but she crossed all hurdles bravely.

Her social & political rather freedom activities were intensified so much that she was made the fifth and last British President of Indian National Congress in 1917.

Dr. Nigam has pointed out that she was so much fascinated towards India that she made (page 65) the following statement at Bangalore.

That she was a Hindu Pandit in a former birth and is visiting her won land after a Sojourn in the west where she was re-incarnated to know the nature of the materialistic civilization of those regions.

She is also reported to have said in an address at Tinnevely as follows:

- (1) The Hindu Theosophy is the best of all philosophies.
- (2) The Hindus are the wisest of all nations.
- (3) The Sanskrit language is the best of all languages.
- (4) Western Civilization, with all its discoveries in science is nothing compared with Hindu Civilization.

(5) All that is best in the west has been borrowed from India.

Shri Seshadri Ayyar, the diwan of Mysore said she was the incarnation of Saraswati and their sisters.

In this context she is an educationist compiled small booklets containing tales of Aryan greatness for the use of little boys & girls. She also produced a universal Text Book of Religion & morals which a universal Text Book of Religion & morals which is a compendium of the basic truths of all great religious. It is stated by Dr. Savita that through her efforts mainly & those of Swami Viveknand, the western world came to know something of India's spiritual treasures which were engulfed in centuries of darkness & oblivion. They brought the light & illuminated the hidden treasures of Indian thought.

Dr. Nigam has Illustrated/elaborated all her important roles from 1913 to 1933 in India and has depicted her tireless services rendered to Indian in this small volume.





## **PREFACE**

Studies on contribution of Dr. Annie Besant on Political, social, educational and religious aspects are of great relevance to India to-day. The role and contribution of Dr. Besant in freedom movement is of profound importance. Hence Dr. Savita Nigam's work is a welcome addition to the literature available on the subject.

Dr. Nigam has rightly pointed out that before coming to India in 1893, Dr. Besant was not new to politics. She had worked in political movements, wrote on political events and worked with great leaders like Charles Bradlaugh and George Bernard Shaw.

Annie Besant understood imperial politics better, 'that is why when in 1914, war broke out in Europe and Britain needed the support in the fight against Germany. Annie said, "England's need as India's opportunity." (p. 15) Dr. Nigam rightly states that in 1916 Annie launched the Home Rule league and for the first time India had a political party to fight for change. Annie Besant worked for freedom movement through press and platform. Annie suffered internment but brought the subject of Indian political

freedom world wide. Indian rose to the occasion and gave her the greatest honour of her lifetime by making her Present of Congress in 1917. It was during her presidentship of the Congress that the party was stirred to struggle for freedom for the whole year and not merely a debating club for the period of the congress session.

Dr. Annie Besant was an intellectual in politics, that is why in the terrible disorders in the Punjab in 1919. Dr. Nigam points out, Annie Besant supported the imperial policy of repression, thus alienating the natives, who turned for leadership to Mohandas Gandhi. But the fact remains that Gandhi used her political wisdom in calling for quit India movement after almost three decades during second world war. Dr. Nigam has made use of extracts from Dr. Besant's *New India* in support of her contribution for freedom movement, which makes the book useful for not only common readers but also for all those who want to undertake further studies on this immensely important subject.

## INTRODUCTION

India attained independence in 1947. The seed for it, perhaps had been laid a hundred years before it, in the birth of an Irish lady at London, the seat of power of an Empire, where the wealth of India was being siphoned by the merchants, obtained by trade and plunder, from India, the Karma Bhoomi. How cause and effect theory works! The fortune turns like a wheel. At that time, the glory of the British Empire, was in its zenith. Queen Victoria had proclaimed in 1858, the Crown's subjects will be protected, without any discrimination to the 'Natives.' The germination of this guarantee had already started in the birth of Annie Besant in 1847.

Annie Besant, adopted India, as her Mother Land. Whose culture, she considered, is far ahead of Britain or any other Western country, and took up cudgels on behalf of India as far as 1875, before even setting her foot on India, to protect their interests. Her contemporaries were Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru, Netaji, Sapru, yet it was to the credit of Annie Besant to be one of the two pioneers to give a wake up call to India and to cry for Self Respect as Home Rule

(Self Rule) to the despondent Indian population who was slumbering quietly in the lethargy of fatalism to rise for an action. It is heartening to know that she found admirers even in the Charming Nehru, and M.K. Gandhi. (Who were later the PM and the father of the Nation respectively) during their younger days. The following clippings as their quotes, will vouch her standing in Indian History!

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who met Mrs. Besant for the first time in 1901, says this of her: "One of the outstanding events in my life is the day when I was twelve then and both her personality, the legends that already surrounded her heroic career and her oratory overwhelmed me. With a young boy's admiration and devotion I gazed at her and followed her about. Then came a gap of many years during which period I hardly saw her; but that admiration continued for a great and unique personality. Long years afterwards I again came into intimate contact with her in the political field and again became a devoted admirer."

"It has been a very great privilege for me to have known her and to have worked with her to some extent, for undoubtedly she was a dominating figure of the age. India especially owes a very deep debt of gratitude for all she did to enable her to find her own soul."

And Mahatma Gandhi writes about her: "When I was studying in London in 1888, and after, I have become, like many like me, an admirer of Bradlaugh and Besant. Imagine my excitement when one morning I read in the London Press that Annie Besant had become a Theosophist under Blavatsky's inspiration. I was a mere boy practically unknown to anybody. I would have been more satisfied if I could have touched the hem of the garments of Madam Blavatsky and her distinguished disciple. But I could not, though some friends had kindly taken me to Blavatsky

Lodge. When Dr. Besant came to India and captivated the country, I came in close touch with her and though we had political differences, my veneration for her did not suffer abatement."

"In what direction was not Mrs. Besant great, in what field not the pioneer tiller and sower? She poured new life into every department of life and culture into all races and countries of the world. Education, social reform, and even forbidden sex, labour and radical movements, political evolution of dependent peoples into Statehood and Nationhood, and Self Respect, a closer organisation of warring nations into mutual understanding and sympathy and co-operative global order in the encyclopaedia of human endeavour has anyone shown greater dynamic drive and foresight than Mrs. Besant? She grew with the years and grew beyond them and kept on growing. Old age for sooth! Every year was a new age with her no non-age. Humanity, drenched in wars, lies and bloodshed—you did not deserve such a mother. That is why she left us the immortal, the immaculate." That is the lament of Dr. Cuttamanchi Ramalinga Reddy, a veteran of Chittoor, who did not see eye to eye with Mrs. Besant in her religious outlook!

Annie Besant had extraordinary exceptional vision, phenomenal energy, great organizational ability, utter selflessness, and the capacity to inspire men and women to live up to the best in themselves. In India, they spoke about the three paths of *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, and *jnana yoga*. All the three were synthesized in her. Her services to humanity were of so varied a nature, so brilliant, that people have remarked that other persons would have needed several lives to accomplish what she did in one life. But it was not only through action that Dr. Besant distinguished time, her intellectual abilities were unquestionable. Her range of studies and interests covered such a wide variety

of subjects that one wonders how she managed to do all that study in the midst of so busy a life.

Her life was full of hurdles and she had to battle her way through the prejudices, rotten conventions etc. in order to get ahead of her times. She came to India in 1893, but she had already taken up the cause of India while in England. In 1895 she settled in Benaras and lived austere life. She took to Indian ways naturally—sitting on the floor, eating sparingly, working hard, learning the religious lore of India. She studied the scriptures not only of Hindus, but of all the religions, and then gave a series of splendid lectures on the major religions of India. Her teachers often felt that she surpassed them in understanding or which she herself wrote: “I may say that if I have written and spoken much, and studied and thought more, and that I have not given to my mistress truth that which has cost me nothing.”

While Annie Besant was living and studying in Shanti Kunj, which was her home in Varanasi, she pondered deeply over the degeneration which had fallen upon India, which she loved so much. She concluded that one of the first steps to be taken was to give the right kind of education to the young—an education which would restore self-respect to a people humbled by foreign rule. In those days, Indian children hardly knew anything about the heritage, philosophy, culture or even the history of their own country, for education was British-oriented. To help them to regain knowledge of their precious ancestral heritage and recover their dignity, she started the Central Hindu College (CHC). It sought to provide insights into ancient ideals, along with the best of modern education. She did not call upon students to become orthodox Hindus, Muslims, and so forth, but to study the ancient ideals and cull out what is appropriate for the time. Modern education,

she realized, is absolutely essential to cope with the challenges of the time. Even though she spoke of India's ancient philosophy and spiritual heritage, although she loved India, she was a world citizen—not swayed by any narrow considerations. Therefore the first principal she chose for the CHC was Dr. Richardson, a scientist and theosophist. In the college she gave inspiring series of lectures on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and published a magazine which became influential all over India. It was a time when by the conduct and bearing of a person, people knew he was or had been a student of the CHC. The stress was on character, on social reform, on broad-mindedness and national service.

In 1913 the CHC became the nucleus of the Benaras Hindu University. Annie Besant proposed and, in fact, drafted a petition along with other colleagues to start an Indian university, not a Hindu university. She foresaw that if Hindus have a Hindu university, Muslims would demand a Muslim university, which was what happened. Therefore she proposed an Indian university which she hoped would be a nursery for outstanding citizens. Instead of being a mint for hallmarking a certain level of knowledge. But, the pressure to form a Hindu university was strong. So she not only accepted what the majority wanted, but made a magnanimous gift of the extensive land and beautiful buildings of CHC to the university-to-be. The CHC was a most worthy nucleus for starting a university, because it spearheaded national regeneration, and out of it arose young Indians of sterling character, intellectual probity and the will to right action. They were all prepared for service to the nation.

Annie Besant was much ahead of her times. In Victorian England, women were thought fit only to be dolls in drawing rooms or drudges of the household. Their very

dress made it impossible for them to work effectively anywhere. Talented women authors like George Eliot and the Bronte sisters had to write under men's names, or else their books would have been rejected before they were read. Queen Victoria spoke of this mad wicked folly of a women's rights with all its attendant horrors. We are reliably informed that the subject of women's right made the queen furious.

At that juncture, Annie Besant emancipated herself to the great benefit of humanity, though at great cost to herself. Her life was marked by a fearless and ardent quest for Truth, as well as an unbounded love and concern for all living things. Some of her biographers have avowed their bewilderment and inability to understand her actions. But any one who realizes that there was nothing more important to her than loyalty to Truth, nothing which moved her more than love for humanity, can easily grasp why she proceed from being a fervent Christian to becoming a Freethinker, an Atheist, then a Fabian Socialist, and finally a Theosophist. Undaunted, she passed through tears and trials ever seeing the best solutions for the problems of humanity.

The events of her life proved what she wrote. At times she had to abandon the cherished company of long-known friends. She suffered calumny and attacks on her character, but she said:

"An imperious necessity forces me to speak the truth, as I see it, whether the speech pleases or displeases, whether it brings praise or blame, that one loyalty to Truth I must keep stainless, whatever friendships fail me or human ties be broken. She may lead me into the wilderness, yet I must follow her; she may strip me of all love, yet I must pursue her; though she slays me, yet will I trust in her; and I ask no other epitaph on my tomb but "She tried to follow Truth."

Another keynote of her life was an immense capacity to love all which stretched out not merely to a few chosen



friends, to people she approved of, but went to all, including all those who suffered, and irrespective of whether they disapproved of her, or even abused her.

Annie Besant was born on 1 October, 1847. As a young woman, she read the lives of the saint martyrs, which stirred in her desire for sacrifice. Her religious aspirations led her to marry a clergyman while she was yet innocent of the duties of a married woman. The rigid, over-bearing, narrow-minded husband brought many hardships to this tender young woman. When a child was born and became very sick, she delved into the problem of suffering, seeking an answer in the Christian gospels. The discrepancies in the gospel stories set her to questioning, but she was told that she must accept and not question. This she could not do. So, she was forced out of her home, and the Church, and finally lost custody of her children.

It is difficult today to imagine what this ordeal meant. Any woman who chose to live away from her husband was suspect. Contemporary society was utterly hostile, but fearlessly she broke through the shackles of conventional respectability. She later declared that all the while her heart was religious in its very fervor of repudiation, in its rebellion against dogma that crushed the reason and did not satisfy the soul. "I went into the darkness alone, not because religion was too good for me, but because it was not good enough. It was too meagre, too common place, too little exacting, too bound up with earthly interests, too calculating in its accommodations to social conventionalities.

When Dr. Besant came into contact with the Secularist and Free Thought movement in England, it opened new vistas of thought for her, and also of service to the poor. With that silvery voice for which she was famous, she spoke to large audiences. The great leader of the Secularists at that time, Charles Bradlaugh, trained her in political work.

She became one of the pioneers of the Trade Union Movement in Britain, and helped to forge an alliance between the unions and the Labour Party. But while she talked, travelled, spoke and fought many a mighty battle, it was not out of hatred of society, but out of love. She wrote later:

"Politics, as such, I cared not for at all, for the necessary compromises of political life were intolerable to me, but wherever they touched on the life of the people they became to be of burning interest against our aggressive and oppressive policy in Ireland, in the Transvaal, in India, in Afghanistan, in Burmah, in Egypt, lifted up my voice in all our great towns against war, against capital punishment, against flogging, demanding national education instead of big guns—no wonder I was denounced as an agitator, a firebrand, and that all orthodox society turned up at me its most respectable nose.

It was amazing that at a time when nobody spoke of such questions she sponsored birth control, and fought valiantly in the courts for the right to provide information on this subject. She had seen the miserable poverty of the East End of London and of other cities after the industrial revolution. Her contact with the working class made her realize that those in search of profit are unfit to be the guardians of the poor who work for them. The laissez-faire philosophy of those times made the big industrialists and the owners of property the 'protectors' of their employees and the poor. Her radical colleagues too believed in free enterprise. Therefore she went over to Socialism."

Bernard Shaw later on wrote of her in his inimitable style: Mrs. Besant is a woman of swift decisions. She sampled many movements and societies before she finally found herself. And her transitions were not gradual, she always came into the movement with abond, and was preaching

a new faith before the astonished spectators had the least suspicion that the old one was shaken. She became a sort of expeditionary force, always on the front where there was trouble and danger, leaving the routine to us and taking on the fighting on her self. An attempt to keep pace with her on the part of a mere man generally wrecked the man.

But socialism's crusade was against the environment; it sought to change the outer conditions of the system, and did not take into account human psychology. Social service was not substitute for compassion, for freedom from self-interest. So this led her on to Theosophy. She was attracted to the theosophical Society because it was ahead of its time. When nationalism was the highest to which idealism could rise, the Theosophical Society affirmed universal brotherhood. Nationalism, Dr. Besant realized, would ultimately create conflicts. The only solution for peace is, not the division of people into nations, except culturally, but universal brotherhood. When Darwinistic materialism was the rage among intellectuals, Theosophy pointed to the atma as the essential life of man. When religious dogmatism was accepted as legitimate, Theosophists pointed to the common source of all religious teachings—the Ancient Wisdom or Brahma Vidya. When the colonized world was subjected to Christian propaganda enforced the whiteman's superior power, the Theosophical Society called on people to turn to Eastern wisdom. She found in the philosophy of the Theosophical Society and in the Society itself an outlook and teaching which took her from 'storm to peace.' By the time she settled in India, having toiled in many fields—prison reform, anti-vivisection, women's rights, colonialism, etc. she had the ripeness and maturity, both spiritually and practically, to tackle the grave problems of India. She was the greatest orator in England, possibly in Europe, and she put this power to use through the length

and breadth of India to stir Indian people to a sense of their own responsibility.

Two series of lectures entitled 'Wake Up India' and 'India: A Nation,' delivered in every part of the country, called upon the educated classes to lay the foundation of the Indian renaissance. She started national schools all over the country. The Indian Boy Scouts movement and the Women's Indian Association established in every province were inspired by her. Home Rule League became a powerful force energizing the country politically. At that time the Indian National Congress met only once a year and was a conservative body. She galvanized it and gave unprecedented momentum to its work. She also sought to bring moderates and extremists, as well as Hindus and Muslims, together on platform of national unity. Many of her slogans, such as 'England's difficulty is India's opportunity,' became household words.

Her paper, *New India* was so great a political force that the government tried several times to suppress it by demanding large amount of money as security. *She was the first President of the Indian National Congress to make the Congress organization an effective agent throughout the year.* Her close connection with the British Labour Party won for India influential sponsors, including Lansbury and Snowden.

Her political star rose to its zenith when she became the President of the Congress in 1917. But the first World War broke out and new forces began to operate. Martial law was declared in the Punjab, the Rowlatt Act came into effect, the Jallianwala Bagh incident took place, and Indians felt that repression was the reward for India's war contribution. Against this background the non-cooperation movement began. When Gandhiji emerged as the leader of the non-cooperation movement, she felt the precious

heritage of respect for law was threatened by mass civil disobedience. So *New India* became the instrument to oppose this, and her popularity declined. The demoralization and failure of the non-cooperation movement led to Hindu-Muslim riots. She once more tried to use her influence to forge a common demand for freedom. She formulated a Constitution for free India through the Commonwealth of India Bill, with the cooperation of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others. She had it moved in the British Parliament as a Private member's Bill. The salient feature of this Bill was the right to vote given at the panchayat level. Election to district, provincial and national bodies was through indirect election. The democratic procedure could not be established all of a sudden. With expansion of education, training in civic responsibility and other qualifications, an increasing number of people were to be prepared to participate in the democratic process. A set of qualifications and disqualifications, both for voters and for members of the legislature and executive at various levels was envisaged—an important matter which unfortunately the leaders of the Congress chose not to apply their minds.

This question is even now relevant to be considered at the highest level.

The ideas in the Bill, formulated by a person of greater political maturity than most of her colleagues, if accepted, would have brought a kind of peace to India which we do not have now. The tremendous problems which arise through vote-catching, the corruption involved, the many evils of the present system, may, in fact, have been reduced.

For Annie Besant, her political work was only the foundation to prepare the way for a greater constructive activity. India's freedom was a means in her mind for a moral and spiritual awakening. India had a special message to give the message of the *Rishis* to the whole world. India's

genius is for spirituality, not for politics, she said:

"There is only one nation the world knows that may still choose the spirit instead of the body, and spiritual knowledge rather than material gain. That nation is India, that people, the Indian people. And if you, the last hope of the spiritual life of man, if you give everything to matter, then in your apostasy the world is betrayed, and in your death humanity shall find its grave.

When one looks back into the history of India, he sees how the loss of great moral and spiritual ideals brought decay at many different levels. Annie Besant's message is relevant today. It is the decay of spirituality which has led to the decay of culture, of creative power and true intelligence, and once there is the decay of culture, then inevitably material prosperity is lost."

### **Annie Besant: As a Theosophical Leader**

After the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions she came to India. Initially she docked in Ceylon. There she was honoured with beautiful garlands and fragrance of incense. Crossing into India with Colonel Olcott, she reached India in Mid-November and Madras by Christmas. Madam Blavatsky had established magnificent international headquarters at Adyar, Madras. During the spring of 1894, Annie went briefly to England before leaving for Australia. A newspaper carried a sensational story criticizing the founders of the Society and a scramble for power that developed after Madam Blavatsky's death. During an ensuing controversy, the Society split. The Irish branch, some English sections, and many American groups supported Judge; but the parent society survived the schism and remained the stronger section. Many Theosophists residing in the United States identified themselves as the actual heirs who were following Madam Blavatsky's

teachings. Besant returned to the United States and conducted an extensive campaign. Another controversy came to surface when Charles Webster Leadbeater, who also was a Theosophist and with whom she researched and investigated reincarnation, was accused of sexual conduct with minor boys. Her reputation was not damaged, and their investigations were instructive, as Nethercot noticed:

The principle under which the two proceeded, he finally discovered, was the same one that Madam. Blavatsky had first expounded to Annie Besant herself when the neophyte wanted to learn the way to the occult world: let your imagination, your intuition, your inspiration take complete control of your mind and trust them; if you are physically attuned to the greater, immaterial process, they will lead you to the truth.

Annie Besant's interest in a universal commonality within the great world religious persisted. When she delivered her lectures during the eighteenth annual anniversary convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar during December, 1893, she started a series that continued annually during the international convocations through 1924. A month after her initial arrival in India and fourteen years preceding her election to the presidency, she sensed that the 1893 Parliament had stimulated Americans' interest in Eastern religions and had strengthened an academic discipline called "Comparative Religions." Four convention lectures delivered during 1896 discussing Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity were published in 1897 as *Four Great Religions*. A second series was presented in 1901 covering Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, and Theosophy. In 1966, both series, except the address on Theosophy, were rearranged and published as *Seven Great Religions*. In the 1896 lectures, as Newcomb noted, she encouraged her audience to seek spiritual treasures in each religion, demonstrated the great beauty and underlying

unity within the world religions, and explained that Theosophy might be abstracted from all religions. Besant maintain that studying religion requires examining the founder. The process entail analyzing the esoteric religion addressed to the general public, the religion presented to the educated and the cultured, and the mysticism expressing humanity's universal spiritual yearnings. In these speeches, Besant surveyed the sacred scriptures and sometimes additional writings cherished by the adherents who embrace these world religions, from a perspective provided by occult knowledge.

The speaker believed that no greater service could be performed than drawing these apparently different religions together. She described these persuasions as originating from one source. She presented Mohammed, Christ, Zarathustra, Moses, the *rishis*, and the *Bodhisattva* as members from one powerful fraternity and serving as the guardians protecting humanity. She explained that each religion has a particular purpose to fulfil in the world; every religion is suited to a specific nation to which that proclamation is given; and a religion is intended to instruct and influence a definite civilization during its evolution. Besant believed that each religion has a special word to speak and a specific message to present. Examining a common foundation undergirding all world religions, she maintained that the unity within religions stems from their spiritual truth, the philosophical concepts, and the mysticism that informs and instructs humanity about their identity with divinity and their pilgrimage to return to the divinity from which they originated. She warned rightly about every religion being weakened by the distortions and corruptions that developed though the centuries that passed.

Besant surveyed each religion specifically and separately. In her speech on Hinduism she stated the



spiritual truths expressed in the Vedas and the *Upanishads*; the esoteric knowledge contained in the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata*; and described yoga as a discipline with which spiritual truth can be comprehended through gradually unfolding inner facilities. Discussing *Zoroastrianism*, she said that from an early time a succession of great prophets superintend the Iranian people's development; prophets in this lineage revive and reinforce the original teaching; however, the first Zoroaster taught the essential principles that are the fundamental foundation supporting every religion. Eventually, commentaries were composed, expressing and explaining the sacred literature given by the first prophet and the immediate disciples. Through passing centuries, fragments from these reversed writings survive, permitting and imperfect statement of the original principles. Besant stated that in *Zoroastrianism*, the original teachings emanate from a primal Source, that the prophet was among the divine initiates, and that *Zoroastrianism* descended from the historic past but became poorly represented during subsequent decades. Besant summarized Jainism's essential teachings, saying that persons, by injuring no living creature, reach the Nirvana and experience a perfect community containing all living beings. She asserted that the Jains and the Buddhists are offsprings from ancient Hinduism. Jains believe that at the highest spiritual experience, an aspirant apprehends the self as the pure knowledge that a person is by nature through heightened consciousness; a devotee comprehends the reap of the Knower of all that is.

After surveying *Hinduism*, *Zoroastrianism*, and *Jainism*, Besant Studied Buddhism. She claimed that Buddhist teachings are discovered within the noblest truths taught in all great religions, although Buddhism is encumbered with corruptions and misrepresentations. However,

Buddhist scriptures echo Hindu teachings, but Buddhist expression is suited for communicating this religion outside India. So inextricably interwoven is the Buddhist's biography with his teachings, that when his instructions are separated from his biography, these sayings become diminished in their power. Besant claimed that Buddha was a Hindu addressing Hindus. For forty-two years, the Blessed One wandered through India, refusing to disappear into *Nirvana* and claiming that release from suffering comes through extinguishing desire. The Blessed One taught his followers to eschew wicked behaviour, practice perfect virtue, and completely subdue the mind. An essential commonality within *Buddhist* and *Hindu teachings*, said that the teachers who impart these religions belong to a single community. No essential difference distinguishes a Hindu Master from a Buddhist master. Buddhists and Hindus were on Indian soil and speaking the same spiritual truth. Exhibiting goodwill, tolerance, and understanding, she appealed to the Hindus to accept, acknowledge, and appreciate the Blessed One:

The Buddha comes to you, a man of your own country, the glory of the Hindu people born in the Kshattriya caste, belonging to the Aryan people, teaching the ancient truths in a new form, and making them ready for the training of vaster multitudes. He is ours, as he is also the world's greatest among its teachers, purest and fairest of all the blossoms of humanity, this flower flowered on the Indian soil, this teacher spoke the Indian tongue, and loved the Indian people.

Using the sacred scriptures, the church fathers' writings, and occult knowledge, *Annie Besant* attempted to untangle the essential from the non-essential in Christianity. She perceptively observed that a certain obscurity surrounds the historic origins, that enormous differences separate Christians, and that the immense given to correct

intellectual beliefs causes controversy. The speaker noted that minimal doctrine is found in the gospels; the creed was initially unwritten and communicated orally; and the secret teachings that were confined to the inner initiates became lost following the collapse of the Roman Empire. This disappearance of these revealed or esoteric teachings explains the crude, corrupted statement contained in contemporary *Christian theology*. Christ, she claimed, was not simply a person who was external from the followers; Christ was formed within his apostles and adherents. Emphasizing the universalism within Christianity, Besant explained that Jesus' teachings are identical with the pronouncements preached by the great spiritual teachers who preceded him. All religions spring from a single source. "Every religion," she said, "is but one coloured ray of the light of God; and in the union of all the religions the true white light is seen."

Annie Besant discussed Islam and described the religion as "the foundation as well as the crown of national life." She envisioned an advantage that would appear when, in a nation where religions are numerous and the one God is worshipped under numerous names, the people unite themselves in a single community and "find in the many faiths a deeper unity, and in the variations of religion the identity of true religion. This unachieved accomplishment would approximate the many-chorded harmony of various faiths blended into one melodious whole." She was convinced that this awesome possibility was India's alone; most world religions are rooted in India; in India adherents can discover the ultimate unity and mighty consummation. The speaker described the founder of a religion as "the heart and the mainspring of the faith." The Prophet of Islam, she explained, commenced fifteen years of contemplation after completing twenty-six years of marriage; the prophet

experienced a quite outer life and a terrible inward struggle. The Prophet fled into a desert during an awful torment that only God-inspired persons can comprehend; one night a brilliant light shone around him and a glorious form called him a prophet and commissioned him to proclaim the holy name. No longer simply Mohammed, he was the Prophet of Arabia who taught the unity of God and the unity of the prophets. The Prophet gathered an initial following that eventually deserted him. He fled to Medina and attracted additional adherents after a military campaign. Following the Prophet's death, his devotees created an astonishing new culture issued from an outburst persisting for six transforming centuries. According to Annie Besant, 13th century Sufism, which was a mystical movement within Islam, taught the truth of evolution that *Darwin* announced to Christendom during the 19th Century.

Annie Besant said that though *Sikhism* developed into a military organisation, yet it was a religious movement and remained to be so. Emerging within Hindu culture adherents embracing *Sikhism* struggled to unite Hindus and Muslims in a single community professing and practising love of God and service to humanity. Guru Nanak, the first in a succession of spiritual teachers, encouraged aspirants to discover the reality within religion, to experience the life behind and beyond the form, and to comprehend an inner truth discovered with a sincere spirit. Wandering as an aesthetic dispensing food to the hungry, the guru remained aloof from divisive creeds, professed love for all people while regarding himself as nothing, and exhibited a pronounced passion that holy men during every generation have expressed. Philosophically, *Guru Nanak*, like other prophets, taught reincarnation and *karma*. Nanak communicated the philosophy contained in the *Upanishads* when he instructed the seekers to reach beyond all forms

to the Formless One while never renouncing the numerous forms through which the Supreme is discovered; from the Universal Form, conscious and unconscious beings have manifested before eventually loosing themselves in that form from which they came. He affirmed one Brahman supreme above all, of whom the Gods are simply partial manifestations. *Guru Nanak* was among the great prophets who presented pure *Vedantic teaching*, and encouraged a supreme love of God expressed and extended as love and service to humanity.

As a pioneer in developing Comparative Religion and Asian Studies, Besant sought the universal within the particulars presented by seemingly different expressions of world religion.

### **Annie Besant : An Advocate for India**

The First National Congress was established in 1906 and it is through this that India's growing nationalism and increasing demand for political independence manifested. In ripened ferment and evergrowing tempest, Annie Besant encouraged Indian national consciousness and criticizing caste distinctions and divisions, opposing child marriage, and encourage education. She preferred self-government under Britain leading toward colonial status rather than independent statehood. In the autumn of 1913, she presented an eight-part lecture series, "Wake Up, India," in which she denounced the divisive animosities that separated India into competing contingencies, promoted reforming the caste system and child marriage, endorsed women's rights, and recommended reviving the self-governing village council. She established a weekly newspaper, the *Commonweal*; she purchased a moribund Madras daily newspaper that she transformed into *New India*. Through these newspapers, she advocated self-

government, ending racial prejudice, and improving living conditions. Besant worked to establish the Home Rule League in 1916 while she facilitated reconciliation among the members of the National Congress.

Besant remained an uncompromising rebel who secured a place among the dissidents and protesters who incessantly shake their contemporaries from their peaceful slumbers with a righteous indignation. In the summer of 1917, the governor of Madras offered her a choice between safe conduct back to England and internment. She indignantly refused returning to England; her imprisonment was an apparent alternative. As she departed Madras for confinement, enormous crowds gathered. Protest meetings erupted across India; and Gandhi proposed that sympathizers conduct a pilgrimage stretching a thousand miles between Bombay and Besant's bungalow. Several principal committees indicated their preference for her as the president of the Indian National Congress during her imprisonment.

It was the largest Congress ever yet held. A great amphitheatre to seat some 9,000 people was specially constructed; the procession that lined up for Annie's arrival was the biggest yet. Banners and garlands were hung above the route, bands played, flower petals showered down on her.

The elderly, stately, white-headed lady chosen to represent all India presented a powerful address before the thirty-second Indian National Congress. Arundale described the presidential speech as among the most beautiful documents produced during her eventful career, a presentation with which Besant might wish to be remembered. Recognizing that election to the presidency was the highest honor that the Indian people bestow, she stated that for the first time in history, an elected official was imprisoned as a dangerous person when the presidential selection was made. She was

crowned with honor during the hours when she was humiliated. She recognized that she was not Indian-born but a daughter from the small island in the northern sea where free institutions were created. Representing herself as a person who was cradled in an England that opposes tyranny and resists suppression, Besant stated that she symbolized union between Great Britain and India. She admonished the audience to follow in the footsteps of India's great statesman and champion of Indian Home Rule, Dadabhai Naoroji. She said that a new age cannot commence until an old age passes away. Elements that destroyed an earlier civilization must be eliminated. During the recent war, India sided with Great Britain, although India lacked political independence and endured coercive legislation that out-rivalled German despotism. However, Indians knew that these restraints were temporary because they were un-English and doomed to eventual destruction. Within this political turmoil she discerned "instances of the divine alchemy which brings the soul of good out of evil action, and consecrates to service the qualities evoked by rebellion." Besant maintained that India's support for Great Britain evidenced India's desire to remain in the Empire, that India's home rule was absolutely necessary for the future safety of the Empire, and that India's resources could not be utilized while the people remained a subject nation. She observed a "new spirit" pervading ancient India that confirmed a worldwide liberation movement that had been accelerated with the recent war. Justifying Indian home rule, Besant contended that freedom remains the birthright of every nation and that without independence, India's interests become subservient to Britain without India's consent. Besant concluded by questioning whether she would be permitted to address the National Congress again and to fulfil her presidential responsibilities. She requested

congressional cooperation, even when disagreement developed. Identifying herself as an Indian countryman through love and service rather than birth, she was determined to fight in the front battle lines and serve to the best of her ability. Convinced of India's glory, she said:

Is there any other land which evokes such love for her spirituality, such admiration for her literature, such homage for her valour, as this glorious Mother of Nations, from whose womb went forth the races that now, in Europe and America, are leading the world? And has any land suffered as our India has suffered, since her sword was broken on Kurukshetra, and the peoples of Europe and of Asia swept across her borders, laid waste her cities, and discrowned her Kings? They came to conquer, but they remained to be absorbed.

Annie Besant believed that these mingled people got welded a single nation by the Divine Artificer. Though India watched the mighty civilizations from the historic past arise and decline, it survived these changes and remained unbroken. India, "the Crucified among Nations, now stands on this her Resurrection morning, the Immortal, the Glorious, the Ever-Young"; she envisioned the Splendour of Asia as the light and the blessing of the world.

In April 1919, Besant was outraged when General Dyer gave order to fire without any warning on the crowded and unarmed Indians gathered at Amritsar in the Punjab. She reminded the public that she had predicted that Gandhian non-violence would precipitate violence. When the National Congress endorsed Gandhi's non-violence, she dissociated herself from the policy and predicted further bloodshed. She proposed that the Indian leaders compose a Constitution for their country that could be recognized by the English Parliament as a step toward self-government. A bill was presented as a private member's measure, was given a single reading, and was shelved.



## **Annie Besant : As a Platform Personality**

Annie Besant was very eloquent and extraordinarily effective with flawless public speaking skills. Prakasa described her as a great artist using words that, from her mouth, sounded like music, her voice rose and fell when she talked, like the waves of the sea surging with a perfect rhythm. Whether an assembled audience was small or large, she responded with a serious purpose and substantive content. Besant's speeches were thoroughly developed during their preliminary preparation, and she employed neither a manuscript nor notes. She enjoyed ending by exciting her audience; she raised them emotionally to a particular pitch and left them with a peculiarly tragic or pathetic scene created by the magic of her words. She hardly made any attempt to entertain an audience or punctuate her speeches with laughter. She was carefully groomed and dressed beautifully in white. She usually commenced her lectures asking an acquaintance to read a Sanskrit prayer that expressed Hinduism. She disliked having anyone speak after she had finished, "She just finished off at the very height of her eloquence," and sat down or left the rostrum, leaving the audience to applaud and demonstrate as they liked. Whichever country she spoke in she was considered as the most powerful platform speaker.

In 1885, before she was forty, Mrs. Annie Besant was known all over the English-speaking world, and by many on the Continent, as one of the most remarkable women of her day. She was an orator whose power was so compelling and whose charm was so potent that Shaw was only one among thousands who extolled her as the greatest woman speaker of the century.

During the summer of 1920, fourteen hundred delegates from thirty-nine countries gathered in Paris for the Theosophists' First World Congress. Seventy-two-year-old

Annie surveyed in sweeping retrospect her forty-six years as a powerful platform speaker, prolific Theosophical writer, and resourceful administrator. During September, 1933, she died peacefully. Nethercot concluded appropriately:

In 1993 the newspapers of the world, in long obituary articles, announced her return into the everywhere, from whence she was convinced she would come back in a new reincarnation to carry on the work which she had left unfinished at the age of eightyfive. She had led many lives during those years all of them full, many of them so different that they could have belonged to utterly different people, and some of them so incredible that it seems impossible they were lived at all.

### **Home Rule for Indian League**

"These are the times that try men's souls." Thus spake on who faced the fiery furnace of trial, and who faltered neither in birth nor in courage. It is ours to-day to face a powerful Autocracy, determined to crush out all resistance to it; will, and that will is to prevent India from gaining Self-Government, or Home Rule, in the Reconstruction of the Empire after the War.

The National Congress has declared in conjunction with the All-India Muslim League, that India must be lifted from the position of a Dependency to that of an Equal partner in the Empire. To that end they drafted a scheme of reform, which proposed that the Legislative Councils should be much enforced and elected on as broad a basis as possible, with a four-fifth majority of elected members, and that control of taxation and expenditure—the power of granting or refusing supply—should be placed in the hands of this Legislative Council, so as to subordinate the Executive to the Legislative Council. This is the feature of the scheme specially selected by H.E. the Governor of

Madras for reprobation, and although it had been planned—in consonance with the practice of civilised nations—by the most responsible public men in the country, and accepted by the great mass of popularly elected delegates at the Lucknow National Congress and the Muslim League, 1916. His Excellency was pleased to aver that no Indian with knowledge of affairs would endorse it, and this soon after it had been endorsed by Mr. Madhava Rao, C.I.E., late dewan of Travancore, Mysore, and Baroda.

The difference of opinion between the Governor of Madras and the large majority of educated Indians is a small matter; but the resolution to crush Home Rule by force is a very serious one. It is practically proposed to strangle by violence the political educative propaganda the Congress ordered its own Committees, the Home Rule Leagues, and other similar public bodies to carry on. They are therefore faced by the alternative of disobeying the mandate of the country or that of the Governor of Madras, an alternative which has been faced in the past by all countries which suffer under autocracies, and which India—the last great civilised country to be subjected to autocracy, save those under the Central Powers in Europe—has now to face. For her self, as a member of the All-India Congress Committee, Mrs. Besant elect to obey the mandate of the country, in preference to that of the Governor of Madras, which has no moral justification behind it, which outrages British law and custom—and imposes an unwarrantable, and, she believes, an illegal, restriction on the fundamental Rights of Man. She knows that this resolution of her setting herself against the strongest autocracy in the world in the midst of a disarmed and helpless people, will be seen to most as an act of madness, but by such acts of madness nations are inspired to resist oppression. Others will scoff at it as an easy martyrdom, deliberately courted; they have already

done so, to discount it beforehand, they who would not face exclusion from Government House, let alone the loss of liberty, the seizure of property, and the exclusion from public life, which has been her one work and joy for forty-three years...

Her real public life dates from her first public lecture on "The Political Status of Women," for the Co-operative Institute, in August, 1874. Since then her life has been given wholly to the service of the public, as she has seen service, so that the deprivation of the liberty to render service is the greatest loss that can befall her. She knows that the selfish and the unpatriotic cannot realise this, but those who have a similar Dharma, they will understand. Apart from the joy of service life has no attractions for her, save the happiness that flows from a few deep and strong personal attachments. To surrender liberty and touch with those she love is to her worse than death. But to live free and with them, a coward and dishonoured, a traitor to Dharma and to India, would be hell. She took the easier path.

Those who rob her of liberty will try to blacken her. In order to escape shame for themselves. The Defence of India Act was never intended to be used to prevent public political speech, free from all incitement to or suggestion of violence and accompanied with no disturbance of any kind. Her paper could have been stopped by the Press Act by forfeiture of security and confiscation of press. But the Government is afraid to face the High Court, which has already pronounced its former procedure to be illegal. An autocracy is ever afraid of law, and hence the Government takes the step of shutting her up—a cowardly course—and hopes to prevent any public protest by striking down all who resist it.

# **1**

## **ANNIE BESANT BEFORE COMING TO INDIA**

**Annie was born to Mr. William Wood and Emily Morris on October 1st, 1847, in London, in a middle class family of Irish origin. Her father belonged to the stock of yeomen and a descendant from a Catholic family, but a confirmed religious sceptic, died on 5th October, 1852, when Annie Wood was five years old, and left the family almost penniless. Her mother supported the family by running a boarding house for boys at Harrow; she used the money to arrange a private tutor for her daughter, who educated her in Evangelism. She was taught to have a strong sense and pride and should wear a smile, even when her heart might break. The training in this reticence and pride of honour was in fact had the preparation to lead a life of dignity and self respect, when she met the public slander in her latter years.**

**When she reached eight, an unmarried philanthropic woman, who embraced extreme Evangelism, volunteered to raise the growing girl. When she was sixteen, Annie visited Europe with her adopted family. This grooming**

developed in her a strong sense of duty towards society and to live independently as a woman for achieving her goals. During her travellings she also acquired a taste for Catholic customs and ceremonials and enjoyed the sensuous fragrance and colours of pagentry.

When she was 16½, she was set free from the school rooms and Annie had all the time and liberty to do what she could wish. Before she was nineteen her life flowed on smoothly, one current visible to the outward eyes, all dancing in the sunlight with musics, studies and parties, being herself to be the merriest guest everywhere. She practised archery zealously and she carried up triumphantly as prize for the best score, the first ring she ever possessed. Of course the croquet game found in her an eager devotee. The second current was running underground, but full deep and strong. Yes. Her darling mother spoiled her, sparing no worries to visit her. When she was eighteen, in the summer of 1866, she was summarily propelled into an engagement with a shy, austere young clergyman, Frank Besant, younger brother of Walter Besant. During that period, she embarked on a compilation work from the Bible; the stories describing Jesus in separate columns and noted with horror the existence of inconsistent and contradicting accounts from Palm Sunday to Good Friday. As her religious doubts grow, Annie decided to divide the structure, supporting Christianity into segments, when she analysed each compartment, she saw that every part collapsed under critical scrutiny. But she immediately felt that to doubt the gospel was a worst sin and observed extra fast as penance for that ignorance. She was a coward at heart in private, while a good fighter in public. In her childhood, if by chance she come across a ghost story it haunted her for months. So, the first doubt was like a stab that struck deep in her, which, though she smothered it,

buried it deep and laid a smoothened turf over its grave, it had been there and left its mark!

In the winter 1867, she married the 26 years old clergyman to whom she was betrothed, in the perfect innocence of her childhood beauty; the knowledge of good and bad in the life's paradise under mother's love was denied to her. The perilous possession of her sensitive modesty and pride was a shock to her in the marriage. Mother should not have led her blind fold to the scaffold of marriage, because girls like Annie slip their neck under the marriage yoke. Under tender guardianship of a mother, the ordinary roughness of life makes a stunning shock. The hidden hurt in Annie grew stronger to serve the poor to become an ideal to prove her love to Him as a sacrifice.

Her first awakening of interest in the outer world of political struggle was aroused in the autumn of 1867 when an elderly poor man's lawyer, Mr. Roberts, convinced her that working people were the wealth producers and social unfortunates who became bothersome burden requiring religious charity. At Manchester, once she was deeply disturbed when three youthful Fenian protestes from Ireland were hanged outside Salfords Gaol for resisting the police. Previous week Mr. Bradlaugh, whom she knew nothing at that time, wrote in National Reformer pleading for mercy for them "Temper your strength with mercy; do not use the sword of justice like one of vengeance, for the day may come when it shall be broken in your hands, and you yourselves brained by the hilt of the weapon you have so wickedly wielded." Meanwhile Frank became vicar of Sibsey in Lincolnshire. Annie and her husband moved to Sibsey.

The Beasant family grew when Digby was born in 1869, and Mabel followed eighteen months afterwards. Marriage ended in disaster. The first conflict came over the money

and Annie's independence. (Annie wrote short stories, articles and books for children. She earned a good deal of money, but her first thirty shillings gave her the intense delight.) She realised that they were illmatched pair. In those days married women did not have the legal right to own property. Frank used to take all the money she earned. Politics further divided the couple. Annie began to support farm workers who were fighting to unionise the works to win better conditions. Frank was a Tory and sided with the landlords and the farmers. Tension came to a head when Frank struck Annie.

She turned to leading Churchman at London for advice. She even went to Edward Bonverie Pusey, leader to the Catholic wing of the Church of England, in Vain. She turned to Frank to make one last effort to repair the marriage. It also proved useless and in 1873, the twentyfour year old Annie confronted with a choice: either compromise or leave home. She left finally for London. She departed from the vicarage and secured employment, working as a housekeeper-governess. She earned room and lodging to support herself and her daughter Mable. Divorce was unthinkable for Frank, and which was not really within the reach of the middle class people. Annie was to remain as Mrs. Besant for the rest of her life. At first she was able to keep contact with both children and to have Mabel live with her. She got a small allowance from Frank, her husband was given sole custody of their two children. She already rejected the divinity attributed to Jesus Christ and refused to attend communion.

She fought for the causes she thought were right, starting with freedom of thought, women's rights, secularism (she was a leading member of the National Secular Society alongside Charles Bradlaugh), birth control. *Fabian socialism* and workers' rights.



Once free of Frank Besant and exposed to new currents of thought, Annie began to question not only her long-held religious beliefs but also the whole of conventional thinking. She began to write against the Churches and the way they controlled people's lives. In particular she attacked the status of the Church of England as a state-sponsored faith.

Annie developed an uncompromised commitment for individual intellectual freedom. She attended services at South Place Chapel, where an extreme rationalist congregation gathered; and she wrote free thought literature for Thomas Scott. Annie Besant joined the National Secular Society and attended meetings held at Charles Bradlaugh's Hall of Science during the summer of 1874. Bradlaugh offered her a position as a columnist and reviewer on the *National Reformer*. Annie Besant wrote her first newspaper column within three weeks after she joined the National Secular Society.

Soon she was earning a small weekly wage by writing a column for the *National Reformer*, the newspaper of the National Secular Society. The Society stood for a secular state: an end to the special status of *Christianity*. The Society allowed her to act as one of its public speakers. Public lectures were very popular entertainment in Victorian times, Annie was a brilliant speaker, and was soon in great demand. Using the railway, she criss-crossed the country, speaking on all of the most important issues of the day, always demanding improvement, reform and freedom.

For many years Annie was a friend of the Society's leader, Charles Bradlaugh. It seems that they were never lovers, but their friendship was very close indeed. Bradlaugh, a former seaman, had long been separated from his wife. Annie lived with Bradlaugh and his daughters, and they worked together on many issues. Bradlaugh was an atheist and a republican. He was working to get himself

elected as MP for Northampton to gain a better platform for his ideas.

Besant and Bradlaugh became household names in 1877 when they published a book by the American birth-control campaigner Charles Knowlton. It claimed that working or class families could never be happy until they were able to decide how many children they wanted. It suggested ways to limit the size of their families. The Knowlton book caused great offence to the Churches, but Annie and Bradlaugh proclaimed in the *National Reformer*: We intend to publish nothing we do not think we can morally defend. All that we publish we shall defend. Law enforcement officers appeared, escorted these nonconformists to the local police station, and watched as these dissidents were searched and confined in separate cells. Besant and Bradlaugh put an appearance at the Court of Queen's Bench in June, 1877. Their defense was commenced by Besant, and Bradlaugh concluded while a forensic confrontation that Dinnage described as follows:

But when the jurymen finally returned to the court after their deliberations their verdict was an odd compromise, much influenced by two extremely hostile members. "We are unanimously of opinion that the book in question is calculated to deprave public morals, said the foreman, but at the same time we entirely exonerate the defendants from any corrupt motives in publishing it." The Lord Chief Justice was nonplussed; he could only direct the jury that what their verdict amounted to was "Guilty."

When the troublesome two subsequently appeared before the bar, Besant and Bradlaugh were made to pay fines and to serve six months' imprisonment; however, the indictment was cancelled on a technical issue when they appealed to the court. They were found guilty, but released pending appeal. In addition to great opposition, Annie and

Bradlaugh also received a great deal of support in the liberal press. Arguments raged back and forth in the letters and comment columns as well as in the court room. For a time it looked as though they would be sent to prison. The case was thrown out finally on a technical point, "the charges had not been properly drawn up."

Fighting to obtain custody of Mable, she simultaneously compiled her compositions describing the French Revolution, translated a book written in French, continued her weekly journalistic contributions, published numerous pamphlets, and lectured when an occasion permitted. Meanwhile, she passed her preliminary examinations with first-class honours; at London university by 1880 she was awarded certificate that qualified her to lecture in chemistry, botany, mathematics, physiology, and basic physics.

The scandal lost Annie her children. Frank was able to persuade the court that she was unfit to look after them and they were handed over to him permanently. Bradlaugh's political prospects were not damaged by the Knowlton scandal. He got himself into Parliament, at last in 1881. Because of his atheism, he refused to swear the oath of loyalty. Although many Christians were shocked by Bradlaugh, others (like the Liberal leader Gladstone) spoke up for freedom of belief. It took more than six years before the whole issue was sorted out (in Bradlaugh's favour) after a series of by-elections and court appearances.

Meanwhile Mrs. Besant built close contacts with the *Irish Home Rulers* and gave them support in her newspaper columns. These were crucial years, in which the Irish nationalists were forming an alliance with Liberals and Radicals. Annie met the leaders of the movement. In particular, she got to know Michael Davitt, who wanted to mobilise the Irish peasantry through a *Land War*, a direct struggle against the landowners. She spoke and wrote in

favour of Davitt and his *Land League*, many times over the coming decades.

However, Bradlaugh's parliamentary work gradually alienated Annie. Women had no part in parliamentary politics. Annie was searching for a real political outlet, politics where her skills as a speaker, writer and organiser could do some real good.

Annie Besant's political philosophy was informed with Bradlaugh's redicalism and embraced socialism. During the summer of 1885, she heard Bernard Shaw address the Dialectical Society; subsequently, she asked Shaw to nominate her for membership in the Fabian Society. Between 1885 and 1887, Besant and Shaw performed piano duets together, and she composed poetry for him.

Annie Besant's social activism persisted. A march and meeting planned for November 13, 1887, was intended to protest the economic conditions; however when the marchers reached Trafalgar Square, the demonstration was disrupted by the police. After attempting unsuccessfully to break a charge against the protesters mounted by the police, she organized the legal defence for the marchers and raised the bail for the imprisoned defendants. During a subsequent demonstration, a man was trampled severely and died from the injuries inflicted during the protest. Annie Besant made arrangements for his funeral, and marched in the procession. With W.T. Stead, she established a weekly newspaper, *The Link*, in which they decried sweetshop labour conditions, denounced extortionist landlords, and deplored child labour. In the summer of 1888, the newspaper published Besant's sensational article, *White Slavery in London*, in which she exposed the terrible conditions facing the women who worked in Bryant and May's match factory. She held a public meeting to protest the deplorable situation; the "match girls" commenced a

strike; and a boycott was promoted. The women were recalled and given slightly better wages, working conditions were improved, and a powerful independent union was developed wherein Annie Besant was an honorary secretary.

She championed for election to the London School Board in Tower Hamlets during the summer and autumn of 1888. Over the fabled East End, Annie addressed meetings where she was cheered by free thought and socialist supporters and denounced by the conservative churchmen. Dinnage claim her service on the London School Board to be the most prominent achievement during her eventful career and established the foundation supporting the school medical programme and the school dinners.

### **Socialist**

In 1885, Mrs. Besant joined the Fabian Society drawn in by writer George Bernard Shaw, soon after its founding. As a brilliant speaker, she did effective work for Fabians.

For Annie, politics, friendship and love were always closely intertwined. Her decision in favour of Socialism came through a close relationship with George Bernard Shaw, a struggling young Irish author living in London, and a leading light of the *Fabian Society*. Annie was impressed by his work and grew very close to him too in the early 1880s. It was Annie who made the first move, by inviting Shaw to live with her. This he refused, but it was Shaw who sponsored Annie to join the Fabian Society. In its early days, the Society was a gathering of people exploring spiritual, rather than political, alternatives to the capitalist system.

Annie now began to write for the Fabians. This new commitment and her relationship with Shaw widened the gap between Annie and Bradlaugh, who was an

individualist and opposed to Socialism of any sort. While he would defend free speech at any cost, he was very cautious about encouraging working-class militancy.

Unemployment was a central issue at that time, and in 1887 some of the London unemployed started to hold protests in Trafalgar Square. Annie agreed to appear as a speaker at a meeting on 13 November. The police tried to stop the assembly. Fighting broke out, and troops were called. Many were hurt, one man died, and hundreds were arrested. Annie offered herself for arrest, but the police refused to take the bait.

The event created a great sensation, and began to be known as Bloody Sunday. Annie was widely blamed or credited for it. She threw herself into organising legal aid for the jailed workers and support for their families. Bradlaugh finally broke with her because he felt she should have asked his advice before going ahead with the meeting.

Socialists saw the trade unions as the first real sign of working people's ability to organise and fight for themselves. Until then, trade unions had been for skilled workers—men with a craft that might take years to acquire and which gave them at least a little security. The Socialists wanted to bring both unskilled men and women into unions to fight for better pay and working conditions.

Her most notable victory in this period was perhaps her involvement in the London match girls' strike of 1888. Annie was drawn into this first really important battle of the "*New Unionism*" by Herbert Burrows, a young socialist with whom she was for a time in love. He had made contact with workers at Bryant and May's match factory in Bow, London, who were mainly younger women. They were very poorly paid. They were also prey to horrendous industrial illnesses, like the bone-rotting Phossy jaw, which were caused by the chemicals used in match factory. Some of

the match workers asked for help for Burrows and Annie in setting up a union.

Annie met the women and set up a committee, which led the women to a strike for better pay and conditions. The action earned enormous public support. Annie led demonstrations by "*match-girls*." They were cheered in the streets, and prominent churchmen wrote in their support. In just over a week they forced the firm to improve pay and working conditions. Annie then helped them to set up a proper union and a social centre.

At the time, the matchstick industry was an immensely powerful lobby, since electric light was not yet widely available, and matches were essential for lighting candles, oil lamps, gas lights and so on. (Only a few years earlier in 1872, lobbyists from the match industry had persuaded the British government to change its planned tax policy.) Besant's campaign was the first time anyone had successfully challenged the match manufacturers on a major issue, and was seen as a landmark victory of the early years of British Socialism.

## **Marxist**

Annie had developed a very close friendship with Edward Aveling, a young socialist teacher, who lived in her house for a time. Aveling was a scholarly figure and it was he who translated the important works of Marx into English for the first time. Annie seems to have fallen in love with Aveling, but it is not clear that he felt the same way. He had certainly a great influence on her thinking, and she was a great support to his work. However, Aveling left Annie to live with Eleanor Marx, daughter of *Karl Marx*. This led to permanent ill-feeling between Annie and Eleanor and probably pushed Annie towards the rival Fabians at that time. Aveling and Eleanor joined the Marxist SDF but

they distrusted its leaders. Henry Hyndman. Soon they left the SDF to join the *Socialist League*, a small Marxist splinter group which formed around the artist William Morris.

It seems that Morris played a large part in converting Annie to Marxism, but it was to the SDF, not his Socialist League, that she turned in 1888. She remained a member for a number of years and became one of its best speakers. Strangely, she was still a member of the *Fabian Society*. Neither she nor anyone else seemed to think the two movements completely incompatible at the time.

Soon after joining the Marxists, Annie stood for election to the London School Board. Because women were not able to take part in parliamentary politics, it is often thought that they did not have vote until 1918. In fact, women householders had been brought into the local electorate in 1881, and soon began to make a mark in local politics.

Annie drove about with a red ribbon in her hair, speaking at noisy meetings. "No more hungry children," her manifesto proclaimed. She made clear that her Socialism had a feminist side too: "I ask the electors to vote for me, and the non-electors to work for me because women are wanted on the Board and there are too few women candidates." Astonishingly, Annie came out on top of the poll in Tower Hamlets, with over 15,000 votes. Annie wrote in the *National Reformer*: "Ten years ago, under a cruel law, *Christian bigotry* robbed me of my little child. Now the care of the 763,680 children of London is placed partly in my hands." Annie was also closely involved in the struggle for the "*Dockers' Tanner*." The dockers were poorly paid for hard and dangerous work. They were casual labourers, only engaged for one day at a time. Ben Tillett set up a union for dockers. Annie played a crucial role in this. She helped Tillett to draw up the union's rule and played an



important part in the meetings and agitations which built up the organisation. Tillett led the dockers in a fight for better wages: six pence an hour. Annie spoke for the dockers at public meetings and on street corners. Like the match-girls, the dockers too won a lot of public support for their struggle. Even Cardinal Manning, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England, came out on either side. After bitter strike, the dockers' tanners was won.

### Theosophist

Besant was a prolific writer and a powerful orator. In 1889, she was asked to write a review for the *Pall Mall Gazette* on *The Secret Doctrine*, a book by H.P. Blavatsky. After reading it, she sought an interview with its author, and met Blavatsky in Paris. In this way she was converted to Theosophy. Annie's intellectual journey had always involved a spiritual dimension, a quest for transformation of the whole person. As her interest in Theosophy deepened, she allowed her membership of the *Fabian Society* to lapse and broke her links with the Marxists. When Blavatsky died in 1891, Annie was left as one of the leading figures in Theosophy. Her most important public commitment to the faith came in 1893, when she went to present it at the Chicago World Fair.

Soon after becoming a member of the Theosophical Society she went to India for the first time. After a dispute, where William Quan Judge, leader of the American section was accused of falsifying letters from the Masters, the American section split away. The remainder of the Society was then led by Henry Steel Olcott and Besant and is based in Madras, now Chennai, India, and is known as the Theosophical Society, Adyar. Thereafter she devoted much of her energy not only to the Society, but also to India's freedom and progress. Besant Nagar, a neighbourhood

(near the Theosophical Society) in Chennai is named in her honor.

Annie Besant's encounters with theosophy accelerated around 1889. She concentrated intensely and heard a voice that she considered the holiest sound heard on earth. Dinnage described theosophy's as follows:

"It allowed for her inherent religiousness declaring that all creeds are only perversions of an original world Wisdom. It dealt with her dissatisfaction with materialism by predicting a universally spiritual nature to everything. It answered her questions about spiritualist and hypnotic phenomena by explaining that magic is not outside nature but has always been part of the adept's skills. It supported her deep belief in the evolution and perfectibility of man, through its fantastic cosmology. And it dealt with her first and last grudge against God the problem of pain, the cruelty of things through the doctrine of karma and rebirth."

In the beginning she was a student and afterwards she became a leader of international repute who led an international movement that produced a remarkably great impact and significance. During 1875, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society in New York City. Helena was the first woman from Russia who became an American citizen. Another founder was Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, a veteran who served in America's Civil War, a governmental investigator who probed military corruption during that war, and a member of a Commission assigned to investigate the assassination of *President Abraham Lincoln*. Madam Blavatsky assisted greatly in introducing to Westerners the ageless spiritual wisdom cherished in Eastern culture and in reestablishing the forgotten Western mystery religions. An internationally respected expert on certain branches of agriculture and a prominent practicing attorney, Colonel Olcott possessed the

organizational skills essential for establishing an effective international movement. Another founder was William Quan Judge, a young New York attorney. Helena Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott moved to India in 1879. Both of them shifted the headquarters of the Theosophical Society to Adyar, near Madras in 1882.

The Theosophical Society became a non-sectarian, non-dogmatic, and non-political international association providing a nucleus of the universal community of humanity without divisive distinctions, encouraging the study of Comparative Religion and empirical science, and investigating the unexplained laws observed in nature and the powers latent within humanity. The Theosophical Society attracted individuals who were united by their spiritual aspirations and commitment to international community. Their common bond included a spacious religious tolerance and unceasing search for unfolding truth. These aspiring adherents considered every expression of the great world religions as disclosing a single spiritual reality. These incessant seekers professed that truth should be sought through study and reflection and not imposed with authority and dogma; truth should emanate from an individual's investigation and insight rather than through an imposed acceptance of traditional beliefs. Theosophy presented a philosophy that rendered human existence intelligible and demonstrated the inviolable principles that given evolution. Death was described as a recurring incident within an endless life that opens a gateway toward more complete, radiant existence; humans were considered as progressively unfolding their essential divinity and actualizing their spiritual nature through repeated reincarnations. Theosophy was described as knowledge more profound than information gleaned from empirical science, but expressed through an esoteric tradition from

which the various historical religions were expressed in the classic Hindu literature through Mahayana Buddhism within Taoism. Emphasizing a metaphysical foundation reaching into the essence of things through an individual's insight rather than through intellectual reasoning. Theosophy asserted that pursuing this insight entails a possibility for perfecting the human spirit and embraced a timeless tradition pursued by enlightened masters whose chosen responsibility including guiding humanity toward a self-same realization.

Annie Besant's interest and participation in the Theosophical movement grew so much that she withdrew from the National Secular Society and forebore the Fabians. She gave the final lecture at the Science Hall and refused to be reelected to the London School Board. She also retracted from publishing her book that was about birth control. Her zestful participation made the growing movement so popular; literary artists including Oscar Wilde and William Butler Yeats were attracted. She reported contacts with astral guides. She contributed her house in St. John's Woods as the headquarters for the Theosophical Society. Annie Besant was joined by her two children, Mabel and Digby. She departed for the United States during the spring of 1891, and conducted a speaking tour that was enormously successful. While she went to England, she came to know Helena Petrovna Blavatsky had died. As the head serving the Theosophical Society in Europe and India, Besant became an increasingly powerful presence in the emerging movement.

When Annie Besant came back to the United States, she found that she had tiring speaking engagements. She started from New York during late November 1892, and after a rough Atlantic crossing, she completed her tours through Midwest, North-west, the West Coast and the

plains status before she came back to New York. When she reached Boston during late February, Nethercot reported that during the European convention in London during July, an announcement indicated that she had delivered 223 speeches during the preceding year.

In 1893 entire world showed great interest to Chicago because the preparations were completed for the *World's Columbian Exposition*. During the Exposition Congresses would meet and discuss government, finance, jurisprudence, science, literature and religion. A primary purpose prompting the worldwide assembly was to create genuine fraternity and fellowship among the nations and to unite the world's enlightened people through general cooperation to attain the great objectives for which humanity aspires. The World's Parliament of Religions was created as a centerpiece and envisioned as the most remarkable congress included in the spectacular *Columbian Exposition*. A steering committee composed of sixteen Christian and Jewish leaders from Chicago sent approximately ten thousand invitations addressed to religious leaders scattered throughout the world. The world's Parliament of Religions lasted for seventeen days during September 1893. This Parliament attracted from about hundred men and women who represented forty-one denominations and religious traditions. Daily sessions were attended by about four thousand audiences. In history this Parliament was the first formal meeting which drew representatives from the great religions from all over the world. This was a great turning point in America's cultural history. The 1893 Parliament signalled the beginnings of interfaith dialogue in the contemporary world by recognizing Catholicism and Judaism as mainstream American religions including African-Americans and women as religious leaders. Hindus and Buddhists trace the commencement of their presence

in the Western world to their participation in the 1893 Parliament. An event described as perhaps the most important religious gathering that ever assembled, the historic happening celebrated a dawning dispensation, bringing a higher evolution in the planet's religious and spiritual consciousness.

When Theosophists were informed during 1893 that the epoch-making Parliament would convene in Chicago, the leaders of the movement concluded that they should participate. The administrators planning the Parliament decided that the Theosophical Society should conduct its own convention. Gratified to hear this encouraging news, Colonel Olcott appointed William Q. Judge as his direct and personal representative and Annie Besant was designated as a special delegate from the president of the Theosophical Society and the chief speaker representing it. A brilliant, thirty-year-old Brahmin mystic, Professor Gyanendra Chakravarti, represented the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society. Annie Besant departed for the United States on August 26, starting her fourth visit in a little over two years. .

The 1893 Parliament was conducted in a large, gray stone building christened as the Art Palace and designed as a permanent art gallery, which was located in a small park near Lake Michigan and even closer to the bell ringing engines and numbling freight trains operated by the Illinois Central Railroad. The Parliament was assigned two spacious lecture halls named after George Washington and Christopher Columbus; individual congresses convened in several smaller chambers. The sessions conducted by the Theosophical Society burst from their confined quarters; the Lutherans exchanged their hall that seated fifteen hundred people for the quarters given to the Theosophical that seated five hundred people. On Saturday evening

when three thousand persons packed one of the two large halls expecting to hear Annie Besant, the overwhelming response prompted the Parliament management to propose that an additional session be conducted on Sunday in the spacious Hall of Washington, where an added wooden gallery expanded the facilities that accommodated thirty-five hundred people. The hall was not only full to its capacity for Annie Besant's lecture, but hundred had to remain standing there. In order to hear the most prominent contemporary Theosophist, some people lined even the walls.

Annie Besant's speeches presented during the 1893 Parliament expressed eloquently the essential Theosophical principles. In *"Theosophical and Ethics,"* she explained and encouraged altruism and indicated that all philosophy culminates correctly in ethics and ethical conduct. Recognizing an ultimate oneness that characterizes philosophical monoism, she observed that although altruism is service rendered to persons other than oneself, there is an inevitable incompleteness in ethics. In the oneness of humanity she discovered the highest good. Annie stated that the heart of the universe is love, that love and justice are one, and that the Divine is discovered in a unity of love and justice. The speaker described love as an ever-widening expansion and maintained that the heart grows because compassion becomes closed against no one but responds to every human cry. Responding to every appeal expressed by human lips, an altruist discovers that the love that a person gives should be measured against the need indicated by another person. An agonized cry for help is a claim requiring a response. The love given in satisfying that appeal should be measured by the need for that love. Hence, humans should respond to the reality that makes the divinity within humanity the mightiest incentive and the most

powerful impulse. The law of Karma offers an additional imperative. It imparts ethical demeanour and insisted that selfishness generates sorrow and that in reincarnation, and thought makes character. Ultimately, one must assist oneself; people are not saved by another's goodness; no individual secures unearned bliss simply by sliding through a side door towards vicarious atonement. Emphasizing universality in human experience, Besant stated that every great soul who entered the world and taught morality expressed the same thought but used different language. Boundless as divinity, no limitations can restrict the spirit that lives in humanity.

In "The Supreme Duty," Besant insisted that correct living requires recognizing the influence that a person exerts upon others and the world. She contended that nothing is one's own; everything belongs to the aggregate humanity; the few have no rights with which to oppose the claims for service expressed by the whole. Talking about communication, the speaker asserted that a great thinker, be he speaker or writer, gains strength from the audience or the readers. A communicator gives vent to his thoughts latent within an inarticulate humanity. Thoughts arising in a person's mind become a creative power promoting good or evil in the mental environment; thought-force makes persons Gods who determine their destiny and promote humanity's pilgrimage towards a self-actualized divinity. Neither in the physical nor in the mental sphere alone should a respondent render service to humanity; persons must fulfil their responsibilities in the spiritual sphere where no eloquent expressions emanating from platform oratory can describe love or express its sacredness. Annie Besant said that whatever people worship should exert the power that transforms persons into the image of perfect humans and refines them into the perfect gold from which humanity is



fashioned. She recognized that countless contemporary individuals become apprehensive and remain reluctant about bowing their heads before that which is greater than themselves, although proper worship elevates and enhances humans. More important than an individual's right to decide or determine for oneself, she claimed, is the power of recognizing what is more noble than a person's dreams and bowing before this reality until that reality permeates life and makes the worshipper resemble this reality. She made the audience realize that the world is and will become like what they want it to be, good or bad.

## **2**

### **ANNIE BESANT AND INDIA**

Annie Besant joined the Theosophical Society, headed by the colourful and controversial Madam Blavatsky in 1889. This moment, partly resembling spiritualism, then much in vogue, had the serious purpose of elevating the materialistic, scientific spirit of the west through preaching the mysticism and spirituality of Hinduism and Buddhism. Besant found in theosophy the hidden power she had been seeking. She served as President of the Theosophical Society from 1907 until her death (1933). It looks ironic to note that in a lecture during the conventions of 1909, Annie Besant has to say this about to founders of Theosophical Society: "Both the founders joined Buddhism because it was the only Eastern religion which would accept them and they wasted to emphasise the nature of Eastern Religion....Madam Blavatsky's joining was a more superficial character. I once asked and she answered: "Well my dear, I wanted to show that I thought a religion of the East was rather better than a religion of the west."

Besant lived at Society's Headquarters in Adyar, Madras, India and frequently lectured there and in London

to large audiences. She learned Sanskrit and translated the Bhagvad Gita, and she founded a Hindu College in Benares. During the World War I, she became a champion of Indian Home Rule, and she was fifth and last British President of the Indian National Congress. In the terrible disorder in the Punjab in 1919, she supported the imperial policy of repression, thus alienating the natives who turned for leadership to Mohandas K. Gandhi.

When Annie Besant came to India in 1893, some moral values were still held by the society although their roots were shaken. Education was designed to prepare clerks instead of developing character. Women's education was neglected. There was no national outlook. Patriotism was suppressed. The destiny of people was determined by the British and not by the Indians themselves. There was economic exploitation and the welfare of the Indian people was ignored. Annie Besant was aware of this situation much more before she came to India. She first raised her voice against it in 1875 and again criticised Britain in her book "England, India and Afghanistan" for trying to educate and civilise Indians, who were far ahead of Britain or any other Western country in ancient culture and philosophy.

According to Mr. Alan Leo, Col. Olcott's friend and a great astrologer, Mrs. Besant inaugurated her Indian Tour with two lectures in Kandy. Subsequently, she spoke at Tuticorin, Bangalore, Bezwada and other places; and there was the great convention held at Adyar, later the chief Headquarters of the society at which she spoke on "The Building of the Cosmos." During 1894, Mrs. Besant lectured successfully at Benares, Agra, Lahore and Bombay. While she was in Adayar, she threw herself into the work of founding a school for backward communities called "The Olcott Penchama School" and she began her campaign of national education. At a great meeting in the Pachaiappa's

College, Madras, she pleaded for the reformation of the Indian education system. Very soon after she became a theosophist and arrived in India, she came in touch with the leaders of India like M.K. Gandhi.

In April 1894 she met Charles Webster Leadbeater in London, and together she investigated the universe matter and the history of mankind through Clairvoyance. The two became embroiled over Leadbeater's advice to young boys to masturbate. At that time such advice was highly controversial. He had to leave the Theosophical society over this in 1906 and taken back in 1908 by Besant when she was elected as President of the Society.

Bishop Leadbeater, according to C. Jinarajadasa (who succeeded Mrs. Besant as President of the Society) developed the power of clairvoyance slowly: but according to him Mrs. Besant developed it almost overnight in 1896!

From the moment that Mrs. Besant landed in India, she started working very hard for the all-round regeneration of the country. To quote C. Jinarajadasa again, "Now we come to another facet, the Regeneration of India. The moment Mrs. Besant landed in India in 1893, she set that work before herself. She lectured on the best that is in Hinduism, she preached a new type of education, and she urged Theosophical Lodges to start new schools, and to keep the keynote of Indian ideals when teaching Hindu boys and girls. Before she landed in 1893, she already spoke of India as her Motherland. That phrase is in a letter she wrote in 1892."

Mrs. Besant was one among the chief inspirers of the Women's Indian Association and its first President. This association through the influence of Mrs. Besant and her colleagues spread out all over India from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, from Peshawar to Sylhet in Assam. The whole country was covered with a network of this women's

organisation which worked for furthering the progress of women in education, industry, politics as well as other aspects of women's uplift. Thus the women were banded together for the service of their country, so much so that when the Southborough Commission visited India, Mrs. Besant and Mrs. Naidu and the members of the Women's Indian Association waited on Mr. Montague, the then Secretary of State for India, and presented a memorandum which stated that Indian women also should be made eligible for the franchise on the same terms as men. Mrs. Cousins took a leading part in this movement as also Mrs. C. Jinarajadasa, the then Secretary of the W.I.A. Both these ladies were theosophists and accompanied Annie Besant from their native country to India. Mrs. Cousins and her husband, Dr. Cousins, had adopted this land as their own and had been rendering yeoman service to the Indian people in all walks of life.

Undoubtedly Annie Besant was the prime factor in influencing men and women of other lands in favour of Hindu thought and culture at a time when India's own sons and daughters were becoming strangers to their own religions and culture and were beginning to think that their ancestors had been barbarians and forgetting to learn even their own mother-tongue, much less the language of the Vedas and the Upanishads. Annie Besant not only translated the Gita into simple and pure English, but also compiled small booklets containing tales of Aryan greatness for the use of little boys and girls. She also produced a universal Text-book of Religion and Morals which is a compendium of the basic truths of all great religions. Through her efforts mainly and those of Swami Vivekananda, the Western world came to know something of India's spiritual treasures which were engulfed in centuries of darkness and oblivion. She was the one who

brought the light and illumined the hidden treasures of Indian thought.

The founding of the Central Hindu College at Benares in 1898 was one of the tasks which Mrs. Besant committed herself to, with the support and co-operation of her Indian colleagues, some among them were theosophists. She was of the view that the direction of education in India must be in the hands of Indians and that they should shoulder the monetary and administrative responsibilities of evolving educational institutions. She insisted that the guiding spirit of Indian education should be patriotic in outlook, that it should not be divorced from the essence of religion and that it should take the utmost possible advantage of Western science and technology. She had developed certain basic psychological and scientific ideas on the subject and she insisted on catering to the largest number of pupils by charging the minimum possible fee. She also insisted that Brahmacharya or celibacy was necessary for young people for their intellectual, physical and emotional growth. The Central Hindu College High School was not open to married pupils, religion was made an important plank of education and, besides the youths of the institution were trained for social work. Organisations like the "Sons and Daughters of India," "Scouts and Guards of Honour" were inaugurated. Men gathered around her not only from India but from the West who worked for the love of the teaching profession and of her ideals, with no monetary gains. From time to time, the deficit in the working of the institution was defrayed by Mrs. Besant herself. Persons like G.S. Arundale, C.S. Trilokekar, Bhagavan Das and others who were great educationists co-operated with her; and very soon she launched a plan for a Central University. The scheme was launched in 1910, aided by a most influential Board of Trustees including Pandit Madan Mohan

Malaviya, a great patriot and orator, S. Subramania Iyer, Madras, Narayana Chandavarkar, Bombay, Ashutosh Mukerji, Calcutta, P.C. Chatterji, Lahore, S. Sinha, Bankipur, A Hydari, Hyderabad (Deccan), Govinda Das, Benares City, B. Cowasjee, Rangoon (Burma), N.D. Khandalawala, Poona, Pratap Singh, Kapurthala, Hirendranath Datta, Calcutta, D.B. Ayatilaka, Ceylon, Syed Hassan Imam, Bankupur, Mazharul Haq, Bankipur, Lala Sultan Singh, Delhi, Ganga Prasad Verma, Lucknow, and Shyam Sunder Lal, Gwalior. A petition, supported by the Viceroy, was submitted to His Majesty the King of England for founding a new type of university. It is so important as indicating the outlook and the aims of Mrs. Besant that its Preamble may be quoted in full:

"1. For some time past your petitioners have felt the need for and are desirous of establishing a new University in India, having a field of activity of a distinctive character from the existing Universities, and possessing special features of its own; moreover your petitioners believe in accordance with the declarations of the Imperial Government on many occasions that higher education should more and more devolve on private and voluntary endeavours, thus lessening the burden on the State, and that the establishment of a University resting on such endeavours is absolutely necessary for unifying and rendering effective Indian initiative in educational matters.

"2. The most marked speciality of the proposed University will lie in the fact that it will affiliate no college in which religion and morality do not form an integral part of the education given. It will make no distinctions between religions, accepting equally Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, Christian and Muhammadan, but it will not affiliate any purely secular institution. It will thus supply a gap in the educational system of India, and will draw together all the

elements which regard the training of youth in honour and virtue as the most essential part of education. It will be a nursery of good citizens instead of only a mint for hall-marketing a certain standard of knowledge.

"3. The second important speciality will be the placing in the first rank of Indian philosophy, history and literature and seeking in these, and in the classical languages of India, the chief means of culture. While Western thought will be amply studied, Eastern thought will take the lead, and Western knowledge will be used to enrich but not to distort or to cripple, the expanding national life.

"4. The third important speciality will be the paying of special attention and technical training, to science applied to agriculture and manufactures, and to Indian arts and crafts, so as manufacturers, and to Indian arts and crafts, so as to revive these now decaying industries while bringing from the West all that can usefully be assimilated for the increasing of national prosperity.

"5. Your petitioners desire that, in the beginning, the University of India, shall be only an examining body like the Government Universities in India, and the well established Central Hindu College, Benares, has given permission to the proposed University to use its building for examination and office purposes; they trust however that the University will later become a teaching body and fulfil the true ideal of university life, unknown at present in India; and for this they have made preparation in the powers asked for.

"6. Your petitioners believe that the interests of education in India will be greatly advanced by the proposed undertaking, and that the success of the said undertaking will be greatly promoted if it should seem fit to Your Majesty by your Royal Charter to incorporate and establish a University in India under the name of the University of



India with such powers as to Your Majesty may seem proper for the purpose of carrying out the objects aforesaid.

"7. Your petitioners therefore more humbly pray that Your Majesty may be graciously pleased, in the exercise of your Royal Prerogative, to grant a Charter of Incorporation creating the University of India, and extending to it all the powers, privileges and provisions, fully set forth in the accompanying draft charter, or such of them as to Your Majesty may deem fit."

Apart from these educational efforts, Mrs. Besant began to contemplate the political scene around her. Prior to the foundation of the Indian National Congress there were several movements indicating the surge of a new life, but they had lost some part of their original dynamism. Among such movements were the Brahmo Samaj and the British Indian Association of Calcutta.

In the Journalistic field, Surendranath Banerji in the *Bengalee* and Narendranath Sen in his *Indian Mirror* voiced Indian aspirations. In the Punjab, Swami Dayananda Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj. In Bombay *Indu Prakash* was doing the same work as the *Indian Mirror* of Calcutta. Bombay produced great leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Pheroze Shah Mehta, Justice Ranade (who by his historical labours gave a new impetus to Indian patriotism), Gokhale, D.E. Wacha and others. In Poona, the Ferguson College was started as an effort of patriotic self-sacrifice for promoting national education. The Sarvajanic Sabha in Poona and the Mahajana Sabha in Madras were centres of political activity. The Hindu newspaper, amongst whose early contributors were K. Sundarama Aiyar, Raghunatha Rao and T. Madhava Rao, was expressing the new patriotic ideas.

In 1879 the Theosophical Society shifted its headquarters from England to India. The leaders of this

Society who gathered in its annual Conventions were also instrumental in rousing the patriotic feelings in the country. A.O. Hume, a noteworthy member of the I.C.S., retired from his position as Secretary to Government and joined the Theosophical Society; and later on, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the cause of Indian political emancipation. In England, men like Henry Fawcett, John Bright, and Charles Bradlaugh (who won the name of Member of Parliament for India) were upholding the cause of India. Mrs. Besant encouraged the starting of a newspaper in Bengal called the *Phoenix*. Its first editor was A.P. Sinnett who retired from the editorship of the *Pioneer* to take up this work, but the paper failed for want of financial encouragement. About the same period, just after the Convention at Adyar in December 1884, a number of people gathered together in Madras and started the idea of a national movement. The first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Poona in 1885 with W.C. Banerji, the noted Bengal lawyer, as the President. It demanded the expansion of Legislative Councils and the inclusion of elected members. At this time, A.O. Hume, welcoming this movement, produced a number of political pamphlets. Deputations of Indian politicians went to England and a Committee was appointed to carry on the work in England, amongst whom were A.O. Hume, Sir William Wedderburn and Sir Henry Cotton. A newspaper called *India* was started in England. Its first Editor was Gordon Hawart who afterwards became the Lord Chief Justice of England. In the British House of Commons, India gained support from Members of parliament like W.S. Caine, Samuel Smith, Charles Bradlaugh, Herbert Roberts and others. Bradlaugh, as already stated, attended the Bombay Congress in 1889 and Sir William Wedderburn read the welcome speech. He was a retired I.C.S. officer from

Bombay. The Government worked up and tried both the methods of conciliation and punishment. A number of Indians were made High Court Judges and Members of Council and others were prosecuted for sedition or externed. Successive sessions of the Congress were, however, successfully conducted. In 1906, Dadabhai Naoroji presided over the Calcutta Congress just after the partition of Bengal and the Congress adopted the fourfold programme of Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott of British Goods and National Education. The Congress then split into two groups, styled Moderates and Extremists. The Surat Congress of 1907 was presided over by Rash Behari Ghosh. Disturbances took place in the Congress Pandal and the left wing seceded; it was composed of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, S. Duraiswami and several others. In April 1908 the Allahabad Congress was held and the Extremists were excluded. In 1910 the Minto-Morley reforms were introduced which gave separate representation for Muslims and stirred up new conflicts between the two communities. The Congress then came under the control of the Extremists and the Moderates held separate Conferences apart from the Congress. It was in 1913 that an attempt was made to assassinate the Viceroy. A conspiracy arose in the Punjab to win independence by force; and Bhai Paramanand of the Punjab and Aurobindo Ghosh were prosecuted. The latter who was a fiery patriot and a great writer and savant was indicted on tainted evidence. After the trial, he left British India and settled in Pondicherry where his great gifts of literary exposition and religious leadership found full expression.

Mrs. Besant with the help of Dr. Bhagwan Das, published textbooks on Hinduism entitled the Sanatana Dharma Series. She took pledges from boys and girls in favour of abstaining from early marriages and she

condemned virgin widowhood and the ban on foreign voyages. With the help of self-sacrificing educationists like Arundale and Iqbal Narayan Gurtu she made a conspicuous success of the Central Hindu College; and it became a nucleus radiating the Hindu culture and ideals. In September 1913 she organised "The Brothers of Service." They pledged themselves to promote national unity and the country's all-round progress. Her lectures in 1913 related to educational, social and political reform. They included talks on self-government, mass education of boys and girls, the colour bar, the colonial system and the caste system. These were published in a book called *Wake Up, India*. She also spoke of certain personal beliefs which included the idea of a higher and inner spiritual government of the world. Isvara or the Supreme Ruler was, according to the Theosophical belief, assisted by the great hierarchies. Sanath Kumara, according to her belief, was the representative of Isvara, residing along with his disciples in a place called Shamballa in the Gobi desert. She also believed that Vyasvata Manu was still in his astral form guiding the government of the world, with the help of Rishis and Adepts like Agastya, Maurya and Koothoomi. She specially believed that the last two were residing in the Himalayan region and were inspirers in the Theosophical Society, guiding human evolution. She further believed that these great ones would help to achieve all-round progress and evolve into a self-governing unit working for universal peace and welfare.

Inspired by these beliefs and openly stating that she was so inspired and guided, in October 1913 she spoke at a great public meeting in Madras pleading for a Standing Committee or the House of Commons for considering Indian affairs so that India might attain Swaraj or self-rule. She demanded that there should be an organised agitation

in the country throughout the year and not merely during the annual conferences. She founded the weekly newspaper *Commonweal* in January 1914 to assist her in her political work and agitation for Swaraj. In June 1914, she purchased the *Madras Standard* and re-named it as *New India*. She wrote continuously in its pages and commenced an intensive campaign claiming Home Rule for India. She became a delegate to the Indian National Congress in December 1914. She believed that in 1915 she contacted her Guru in the astral body and over and over again, she referred to what she called "marching orders" from her Guru. They were reiterated by her in the following words attributed to the Guru: "You will have your time of trouble and danger. Don't let your opposition degenerate into anger. Be firm but not provocative. Press steadily for the coming changes and claim India's equal place in the Empire."

In pursuance of this message which she claimed to have received, her programme was steady and unflinching. The main planks of the programme were: India should be in the Commonwealth but equal to the other Dominions; Indian freedom should be attained by peaceful methods and all violence should be eschewed. She attended the Bombay Congress of December 1915 over which Lord Sinha presided. He was a pronounced Moderate and called those who wanted full freedom for India 'impatient idealists.' In reaction against his statement, Mrs. Besant called a private meeting in 1915 in Bombay at Chinabaugh and submitted her plan for the starting of a Home Rule League with the object of attaining complete Home Rule for India. She was not afraid to use the phrase Home Rule although many people were startled by it as it recalled the violent Home Rule Movement of Ireland under Parnell. The people who attended the meeting were divided into two groups (1) her followers and friends, and (2) others, afraid of the formation

of the new movement who insisted that the Congress alone should take up the work. She agreed to wait.

### **From 1875 Theosophical Society**

The Theosophical Society was founded in the city of New York on 17th November 1875 "as a nucleus around which might gather all those of every race and land who were in sympathy with the Society's mode of research." Thirteen officers and councillors were elected at the meeting, of whom nine were spiritualists. By a unanimous vote, the President-Founder, Colonel Olcott, and the Corresponding Secretary, Madam Blavatsky, were to hold office for life. There are scarcely any details regarding the progress of the society, it is said 60 have been enthusiastically taken up by a Baron de Palm, who had speculated in Sierra Nevada mining shares and real estate in Chicago. He felt, as he thought, his fortune to promote it when he died, but it appears, however, that his estates only realised ten dollars.

Meanwhile, the Hindu Reformer, Pandit Swami Dayanand, had established the Arya Samaj in India, and, in September 1878, the attention of the fellows of the Theosophical Society was directed to a translation of its rules.

The new Society does not seem to have made much way in New York and was subject to much chaff by the press of that city, so that Colonel Olcott and Madam Blavatsky sought fresh woods and new pastures and made choice to India.

The first Theosophist party landed in Bombay on the 16th February, 1879. It consisted of Colonel Olcott, Madam Blavatsky, Miss Bates, and Mr. Winbridge. The latter two were English by birth, who had become members only a few weeks before the party left America for India. Sometime during the year they were joined by Mr. and Madam

Coulomb, old Egyptian acquaintances of Madame Blavatsky.

The Theosophists took up their abode in the part of Bombay called Gorngaum, and apparently had not much intercourse with the European community. At that time, it was about the "Russian scare." The police, for a time watched their movements, but subsequently this surveillance ceased. In October 1879 the Society started a monthly periodical, called the *Theosophist*. In 1880 the Theosophists visited Ceylon and Northern India and gave lectures on "Spiritualism and Theosophy," returning to Bombay about the end of the year. It was then the boast of Colonel Olcott that they were able to travel without costing them a cent; both Colonel Olcott and Blavatsky, Yet in April, 1881 Madam Blavatsky, Acting Treasurer, presented a statement of the Society's account, wherein it was mentioned that the difference between the Receipts and Expenditure, amounting to Rs. 19,546-3-1 (contra) was advanced as a loan without interest or security by Colonel Olcott and Madam Blavatsky. During the absence of Colonel Olcott and Madam Blavatsky in Ceylon, there had been dissensions at the Society's head quarters, Bombay. Miss Bates was expelled and Mr. Windbridge, who took her part, resigned. The former, a lady of some literary ability, maintained herself afterward by her pen, while the latter, a skilled mechanic, established himself in business as a cabinet-maker in Bombay. A second visit was paid to Ceylon by Colonel Olcott in April 1881, where he remained till mid-December, and in between he visited Tinnevely in India, in October.

The Society did not make much progress in Bombay, for Colonel Olcott in his anniversary address delivered on 12th January, 1882 said: "We have got beyond the preliminary state of polite phrases on both sides. You know

just how we keep our promises, and we knew what yours are worth. The scented garlands Bombay brought us in February 1879, withered long ago; its complimentary speeches of welcome have long since died away in the air."

In March 1882, Colonel Olcott visited Calcutta, and partly through the influence of the late Babu Peary Chand Mitra of that city met with a warm reception and founded a branch there with the Babu as President. From Calcutta Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky came to Madras on 23rd April, 1882. An address of "welcome," signed by several hundred influential Indian gentlemen, was read and the Hon'ble Mr. Humaytin Jh Bahadur, C.I.E., placed garlands around their necks. A large villa at Mylapore was also placed at their disposal. After visiting different parts of the Presidency, Colonel Olcott and Madam Blavatsky left in June, for Bombay.

In July 1882, Colonel Olcott again visited Ceylon, where he is said to have delivered sixty-four lectures, healed more than fifty paralytics in the name of lord Buddha, and to have collected for the Singalese National Buddhistic Funds in Singalese Rs. 867/-

On 7th December, 1882 the seventh anniversary of the Society was celebrated at Bombay, and, from the statement of accounts then furnished, Madam Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott appear to have made a further cash advance of Rs. 1,553/-

As already stated, the progress of the Society in Western India not proving very satisfactory, and the Southern Presidency seeming to present a more hopeful field, towards the close of 1882.

On the occasion of his early travels Olcott became a recognised authority on these subjects, authored three works on scientific agriculture, on the Chinese and African



sugarcane, which passed through seven editions. He was for some time editor of the *New York Tribune* and correspondent of our *Mark Lone Express*. His Government offered him a commissionership of agriculture. While yet young, he became a lawyer not practising in the courts, but advising and transacting business in chambers. During the war with the south, he was appointed special counsel for the War department, and was connected with that office for three or four years. In the course of that employment he was largely concerned in the prevention of frauds upon the Government, examined about two thousand witnesses a year, and saved the Government three or four millions of dollars. He was afterwards retained also by the Navy Department. Much of this employment was administrative rather than legal, and such was the reputation he acquired as a military organiser, that, at the conclusion of the war, he was offered the important post of Military Governor of Virginia, one of the chief lately insurgent States. This, however, he declined, preferring the independence of a private career. He resumed his practice as a lawyer and was elected secretary to the Insurance Convention, a body formed by the Insurance Commissioners of the several States with the view of harmonising the laws and official rules of the States respecting such companies. Colonel Olcott is the author of a consolidation statute and of two large volumes of reports on insurance, which have been very favourably reviewed. He is also the author of a work on genealogy and is well known in America as a journalist and pamphleteer on many subjects. He also holds medals from scientific bodies.

### **General Outlook of the Society from 1888**

Towards the close of 1888 one hundred and seventy-three branches were reported to have been established

throughout the world since the Theosophical movement was started.

Between 1888 and 1889 Colonel Olcott visited Japan and reported to have delivered 76 public addresses to an aggregate of 290,00 people. He also made three visits to Ceylon, two short tours in India and went to England both in 1888 and 1889, during the last visit making a lecturing tour which took him into England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

In 1890 some sensation was caused by a course of philosophical lectures expounding the "Law of Karma," delivered at Madras on behalf of the Theosophical Society by one Douglas Fawcett, a literary man of London. This course of lecturing was not, however, productive of any permanent advantage to the movement.

At the fifteenth convention held in December 1890, Colonel Olcott, in his presidential address, observed:

"So far as I am concerned, I may frankly tell you that even if I had never thought of resigning office, I should feel myself fully warranted in ceasing at my age to waste energy and borrow trouble in trying to keep the Indian branches up to their work with such wretched help as they have given me of late..... Things worry me that did not before, and the cares and troubles of my unique position bear me down. I have been unable to find time for rest and relief from mental strain..... India has stood quietly by, seeing me continually more and more pressed for help, without volunteering to give it, and, because I was not importunate in begging, let me shift as I could for income and helpers."

At the close of the sixteenth annual convention held in December 1891 Colonel Olcott remarked:

"How many wealthy members of the Theosophical Society are not willing to pay even the paltry annual subscription of one rupee. Yet they will pay 50 rupees to

the Cosmopolitan Club, where they can play billiards and drink at a bar."

Interests in Theosophy revived to some extent here in 1893 owing to the course of lectures delivered by Mrs. Besant, who aroused the enthusiasm of the people. When interviewed by the Tanjore correspondent of the *Madras Mail*, she is said to have made the following assertions:

Q. "Do you believe in the Theosophists call 'phenomena'?"

An. "I do believe in phenomena. They were shown to me and their reasons were explained to me by Madam Blavatsky who was my "guru," and I understand them as the results of psychic development."

Q. "Have you seen a mahatma?"

An. "I have."

She is reported to have made at Bangalore the following statement:

That she was a Hindu pandit in a former birth and is visiting her own land after a sojourn in the West where she was re-incarnated to know the nature of the materialistic civilisation of those regions.

She is reported to have said in an address at Tinnevely as follows:

1. The Hindu Theosophy is the best of all philosophies.
2. The Hindus are the wisest of all nations.
3. The Sanskrit language is the best of all languages.
4. Western civilisation, with all its discoveries in science, is nothing compared with Hindu civilisation.
5. All that is best in the West has been borrowed from India.

Her profession of Hinduism, her outrageous flattery

of everything Indian, and her vilification of England have made her immensely popular among the Hindus who are favourably inclined towards Theosophy.

In a telegram from Bangalore she is styled the veritable Goddess of England coming from the far off West for the spiritual regeneration of the land.

Sir Seshadri Ayyar, the Diwan of Mysore, said she was the incarnation of Saraswati and their sister.

Many intelligent Hindus are of opinion that her teaching put back India half a century.

It is reported that Mrs. Annie Besant has been Protestant and High Church Christian, Anti-Christian, Atheist, Materialist, Anti-Materialist, Malthusian, Anti-Malthusian, Spiritualist, Theosophist, Pantheist, Polytheist and Hindu.

Interest in Theosophy cooled here very much since the circumstances connected with the charges preferred by Mrs. Annie Besant against Mr. Judge, the Vice-President of the Society, which led to his severing his connection with the Society, became known to the public.

The particulars of the charges above referred to were of such a nature that impair to very sensibility of the public confidence in the Theosophical movement.

On 22nd December, 1891 Mrs. Besant arrived at Madras and delivered three lectures on the morning of the 25th, 26th and 27th of December 1891 in the Theosophical Society's Hall, Adyar, on "The soul and its sheaths (Panchkosha)."

Mrs. Besant, Mr. Bertram Keightley and the Coltess Wachtmeister left Madras on 3rd January, 1895 for Benares whither, it was said, they intended transferring the office of the Indian section of the Theosophical Society.

The following have already been affiliated with the Theosophical Society:

1. The Sanskrit Sabha of Benares.
2. The Literary Society of Benares Pandits, with Pandit Rama Misra Shastri, Professor of Sankhya, Benares College, as its president.
3. The Hindu Sabha, founded by Mrs. A. Sankariah B.A., late Diwan Peishkar of Cochin.

At the Bharat Mahamandala (convention) of orthodox pandits and other fraternity of Hindu religion and Sanskrit literature convened at Haridwar, 30th May, 1887, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

*Resolved:* that this Sabha unanimously records its appreciation of the unselfish and efficient aid given by the Theosophical Society to the cause of our national religion during the past ten years throughout India and in disseminating in distant countries a knowledge of the teachings of our holy sages.

That this Sabha earnestly recommends all princes and others favourable to Hindu religion (Sanatana Dharma) to assist the society as much as possible to make the Adyar library as useful and powerful a national undertaking as its projectors intended that it should be.

The above particulars are published as a note to clause 1 of article xv, of the Constitution and Rules of the Theosophical Society.

*The Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society:* In 1888 Colonel Olcott issued an order in London creating an esoteric section (a private school of instruction in occult philosophy and science) under Madam Blavatsky's sole direction. Colonel Olcott never interfered with this section which was in Madam Blavatsky's special charge. In 1890 the esoteric section was reported to have grown into a compact body which included more than a thousand of the most intelligent, active, unselfish and devoted "among the fellows of the Theosophical Society."

In May 1891 the esoteric section numbered between one and two thousand "pledged as enthusiastic pupils."

On the death of Madam Blavatsky, which event occurred on the 8th May, 1891, Mr. Judge, the Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, and Mrs. Annie Besant were appointed joint "Outer heads of the Esoteric section." It is asserted by the promoters of the Theosophical movement that the Society as a body, eschews politics and all subjects outside U.S. as declared sphere of work. The rules stringently forbid members to compromise its strict neutrality in these matters.

If under-currents of foreign intrigue existed in the Theosophical Society then it must have been conducted by the Esoteric section, the proceedings of which are kept strictly confidential. Only the members of that inner section can have access to its proceedings.

In spite of periodical internal dissensions and exposures, the Society has made considerable progress during the past 20 years and this is mainly due to the extraordinary personality of its present President, Mrs. Annie Besant. She was persuaded to join the movement by Madam Blavatsky in 1889, but it was not until 1893 that she came out to India. Since 1894, she has almost every year delivered the annual Convention lectures, which attract large numbers of Theosophists from all parts of India. Her annual lecturing tours and her exceptionally fine speeches and writings have contributed in no small degree to hold Theosophy on a large section of educated Indian of different caste and creeds. Her flattery of India, its people and civilisation, her announcement that she was a Hindu in a former birth, and her friendly admonitions about the present degeneracy of the nation completed the effect.

From the latest report it appears that there are 23 National Societies, scattered over the globe in all the five

continents and that 1,483 charters have been issued. The number of lodges is 952. The total membership of these societies is said to be 22,714 and India leads with 5,890; America coming next with 4,145, England and Wales with 2,280. At the Headquarters (Adyar), there are about 50 Europeans and Americans and 40 Indian residents, carrying on the work of the society.

Mrs. Besant's notorious fickleness, her egoism, her insatiable love of power, and her extravagant claims to communion with "Higher Beings" are only noticed by the more discriminating members who are in a small minority.

In 1895 she engineered the agitation against the Vice-President, W.Q. Judge, who was expelled from the society. He had a large following in America where the bulk of the lodge seceded from the original society and recognised Judge as its leader. If, as is probable, Mrs. Annie Besant expected to become the Vice-President in place of Judge, she was disappointed, for A.P. Sinnett was selected. During this year the headquarters of the society were transferred to Benares for which place Mrs. Besant very early expressed a partiality and Upendra Nath Basu was appointed Joint Secretary to assist Bertram Keightley (General Secretary, Indian Section).

The Theosophical Publishing Company, with nominal capital of Rupees 10,000 was also started for the purpose of printing books, magazines and pamphlets on Theosophy.

It is on record that about this time, Colonel Olcott complained to the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India that he and his party were being watched by the authorities as if they were political offenders.

In 1896 W.Q. Judge died in America and a formidable opponent of Mrs. Besant was thus removed. However one Mrs. Katherine Tingley of the same country with a strong party came over on tour to Calcutta, Lahore and other places with the view of starting societies in opposition to those of

**Mrs. Besant.** The same year Dr. A. Richardson, ex-Professor of Philosophy, Bristol College, joined the society and came out to work in India. He was later on employed in the Central Hindu College, Benares, which was started by the society.

In December 1897 Miss Lilian Edgar, an M.A. of New Zealand University, and some time Professor, was brought over to Madras to supplement work of Colonel Olcott and Mrs. Besant. She delivered in the year's convention lectures in Adyar. Prince Prosdon Chorasai, a cousin of the reigning king of Siam, also attended. After the convention lectures, Miss Edgar Colonel Olcott went to different parts of India on a lecturing tour. Though she cannot be compared with Mrs. Besant she is regarded as an effective and popular lecturer.

In 1898, Miss Sarah Palmer, an American lady, attended the convention lectures at Adyar and later it was announced that she had come to advance the movement to improve the condition of the Panchamas. She learnt Tamil and took charge of the Panchama School started by Colonel Olcott. About this time Mrs. Besant organised Theosophical group conferences and federations at various centres. Such meetings were held, among other places, at Salem, Madura, Cuddapah, Gooty, Annatapur, Kurnool, and Chittoor.

In 1900 a statue of H.P. Blavatsky was placed in the Society's hall at Adyar. The anniversary of this lady's death is celebrated by Theosophists in different centres and the day is called "White Lotus day."

The convention of 1902 was attended by J.C. Chatterji, Secretary to His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir, and it was apparently due to his influence that the Maharaja afterwards gave a donation of Rs. 12,000 for the erection of a Theosophical hall in Lahore.



The period commencing with 1905 was most eventful. In this year the Society was formally registered, and this important step was taken owing to the pressure brought to bear upon Colonel Olcott by Mrs. Besant, Sir S. Subrahmanya Ayyar and Upendra Nath Basu, who apprehended that the Society's affairs might not be managed satisfactorily in the future owing to the relations that existed between the Colonel and his young Private Secretary Miss Weeks. The amount of the Society's property at the time of the registration was Rs. 2,80,248-12-9. Mrs. Henricks, a wealthy American lady (the leaders seem to have a genius for securing brains and money for their work), constructed a building for Rs. 10,000, which is now used as the library. She also wrote a will leaving all her property (about 3 lakhs) to the Society, but later on revoked this as Colonel Olcott decided against her in a dispute with some other person (the details of which were carefully kept secret) in a case in which he was appointed arbitrator.

**Charles Leadbeater:** In 1895 there appeared at the Adyar (though not for the first time) Mr. Charles W. Leadbeater, whose position in the Society is next to that of Mrs. Besant. He had written several books singly and in collaboration with Besant and the majority of them dealt with so-called "actual experience, experiments, and investigations" on the other side (above and beyond the earth). After the exposure by Madam Coulomb, referred to above, there was a temporary slump in Mahatmas and other psychic phenomena at the Adyar, but now they all enjoyed renewed popularity. The following is an extract from the account of Leadbeater life, published by Mrs. Besant in the "Theosophist" of November, 1911.

"Leadbeater was born on February 17th, 1847, and as a child, he went with his parents to South America, where he lived a life of manifold adventure. After returning to

England he entered Oxford University, but his career was cut short by the failure of the bank in which his fortune was invested. He managed, however, to take holy orders and he worked as a curate of the Church of England until 1883, when he joined the Theosophical Society. Prior to that he had been much interested in Spiritualism and had made various investigations. Mr. Leadbeater met H.P. Blavatsky in 1884 and came with her the same year to India. He worked in Ceylon for some years—1884-1889 on behalf of the Buddhist Educational movement and subsequently returned to England, taking with him a young Singalese lad Jinarajadasa.

It 1905 Leadbeater became a member of the British Section of the Theosophical Society and held office as presidential delegate, and the same year he came to Adyar. A little later charges were made against him in America regarding his immoral practices with young boys. Charges and evidence were sent through a representative from America and in May 1906, a Council was held in England with Colonel Olcott in the chair and 11 others to consider the question of his expulsion. The evidence was overwhelming and Leadbeater himself did not deny the bulk of it, but tried to justify his teachings in various ways. Among other things he said he learnt it in the Church of England and that the practice prevailed very largely among Roman Catholics. Knowing his expulsion was certain he avoided it by tendering his resignation. Even when, all the members contended that he should be expelled, but Colonel Olcott accepted the resignation. During this controversy Mrs. Besant was absent in India. Judging from the correspondence since published it appears that she helped him, but later on threw him over, and even said that her experiences with him in the higher plane must have been due to "glamour." These revelations and the support given

to Leadbeater alienated a large section of Theosophists, who severed their connection with the Society.

In February, 1907 Colonel Olcott died and a fierce discussion took place regarding the choice of a President; Mrs. Besant, of course, competed and her methods were rather unscrupulous. When she suspected that she was by no means certain of getting elected, she gave out that the Mahatmas of the Himalayan Brotherhood insisted that she should become the President. This move succeeded and she was duly elected. After this Adyar was made the headquarters of the whole Society. The Theosophists in other places were divided into sections, such as the British Section, the French Section, the American Section, and so on.

Though she has given a pledge when she became the President that she would not move for the readmission of Leadbeater for at least two years, she did not keep it but got him readmitted by the end of 1908. This breach of faith further estranged a very large section, but had not so strong an effect in this direction as her next action, which was to put forward a puppet of her own as an "Avatar" (Incarnation).

In the meantime Mrs. Besant had started and developed the Central Hindu College at Benares, and also a Girls' school. Mr. G.S. Arundale and his sister were prominent workers in these institutions. A series of textbooks of "Sanatana Dharma" were prepared and the managers of a large number of institutions were persuaded to introduce them in their schools. Mrs. Besant also started various orders of which the following may be mentioned: "The Order of Service," "The Round Table," "The Golden Chain," "The Sons and Daughters of India," and "The Temple of Rosy Cross," which has a temple in India. The last and the most important is the "Order of the Star of the

East," of which a short account is given below.

Soon after Leadbeater's readmission he came and settled down at the Adyar in 1909 and had never since gone to England or America, possibly because he fears a criminal prosecution there regarding his improper conduct with boys. Soon after he arrived he was selected for a special purpose. About the middle of the year (1909), the two sons J. Krishnamurti and J. Nityananda of G. Narayana Ayyar, a retired Tahsildar of Cuddapah district, had settled at Adyar to do honorary work for the Society in the capacity of Assistant Corresponding Secretary of the Esoteric Section. He prevailed on the father to remove the boys from the Mylapore school where they were studying and he undertook to educate them under his own care, declaring he knew from a reading of their past lives that they would be distinguished in the near future. In December Mrs. Besant returned to Adyar from Europe and in consultation with Leadbeater the boys were finally selected for a new venture. In January 1910 initiation took place at the Adyar in respect of the edler boys Krishnamurti, who was then about 15 years old. According to Mrs. Besant's account in the *Theosophist* of Maxell 1911, this initiation meant "that the empty body of the young disciple (Krishnamurti) lay carefully guarded in Adyar, while the soul was taken away to Tibet for mystic initiation by the White Lodge Brotherhood and that afterwards the new initiate returned to take up again his dwelling therein."

From that time it was asserted that the boy Krishnamurti, known in Theosophical parlance as *Alcyone*, was going to be the Supreme Teacher. It was sometimes stated that he was an incarnation of Jesus Christ and sometimes as Lord Maitreya. In March 1910 Mrs. Besant formally assumed guardianship of the two boys in pursuance of agreement with the father. In April 1910 the

father is said to have witnessed a most indecent act of Leadbeater with his elder boy, another resident of Adyar, a servant, is stated to have seen a similar thing. The father therefore objected to the association of the boys with Leadbeater. Mrs. Besant, probably to pacify the father, took them to England in March and brought them back in October. There was again some trouble as Mrs. Besant would not consent to keep the boys away from Leadbeater, but finally (in January 1912) Mrs. Besant obtained permission to take the boys to England, having given an undertaking they should be separated from him. In February the boys were taken to England, but later on they were sent to Leadbeater in Sicily, it is stated, for a second initiation. When Mrs. Besant returned to Adyar in October 1912, the father filed a suit against her, in the District Court of Chingleput, for the restoration of the children to his care. This was transferred to the High Court and after a protracted enquiry, Mrs. Besant was ordered to restore the children. She preferred an appeal without success and carried the matter to the *Privy Council*, who decided in her favour.

Side by side with the civil case, a series of criminal cases were brought by Mrs. Besant and her party against the Hindu, daily. Dr. T.M. Nair and U. Rama Rao of the Antiseptic for the publication of an alleged defamatory article entitled "Psychopathia Sexualis in a Mahatma—A Clinical Study," which evidently referred to Leadbeater. These complaints were eventually dismissed.

It is undoubtedly a fact that the Hindu, Dr. Nanjunda Rao and Mrs. Katherine Tingley of America were financing or otherwise actively helping G. Narayana Ayyar in the litigation, while Sir S. Subrahmanya Ayyar helped Mrs. Besant. Previous to 1910 the American Branch of the Society at Point Loma, California, which claim to be the

headquarters of all Theosophy and is bitterly antagonistic to Mrs. Besant and Leadbeater, had been very active in publishing and disseminating scandalous details of indecent offences committed on boys by Leadbeater and others, one of whom was actually prosecuted for this offence in California. It is probable that Mrs. Besant's opponents in Madras are in possession of all this literature, which included copies of depositions in judicial enquiries and other evidence, including photographs of compromising letters. A quantity of this literature is also on record in the Criminal Investigation Department office and was obtained in 1910.

From the introduction of the *Alcyone* cult and more especially from the disclosures in the above cases, Theosophy everywhere has sustained a severe shock. It is nevertheless a fact that those who have remained true to Mrs. Besant are more strongly than ever attached to her and she and her party are looked upon as martyrs.

At the end of 1910 a book entitled "At the feet of the Master," alleged to have been written by the sixteen-year old boy, Krishnamurti, was issued by the Theosophical Society and had a phenomenal sale. As it was well known that the boy was remarkable for his dullness while at school a few months before (his younger brother was in a higher class), gave doubts about its authorship, which was entertained not only by the outside public, but also by many members of the Society. The book has nevertheless been very much boomed and has been published in Esperanto, in Singalese and Burmese, and in Braille (for the blind). In 1912 *Alcyone* issued another booklet on "Education as Service."

Some idea of the "hero worship of the *Alcyone*" cult can be formed from the following extract from the official account of the ceremony of distributing certificates connected with the Order of the "Star in the East" which

took place on the 28th December, 1911:

"One after another, old and young, men and women, Indians, Europeans and Americans, as they reached him (*Alcyone*) stretched out quivering hands to take their certificates and bowed their heads at *his feet* to receive his blessing."

The order was formed in Benares on the 11th January, 1911 with the object of drawing together those who, whether inside or outside the Theosophical Society, believe in the near coming of a great spiritual teacher. The members are expected to prepare public opinion for His coming and to create an atmosphere of welcome and of reverence.

The declaration of principles, acceptance of which is all that is necessary for admission to the order, is as follows:

1. We believe that a great Teacher will soon appear in the world and we wish so to live now that we may be worthy to know Him when He comes.
2. We shall try, therefore, to keep Him in our minds always and to do in his name, and therefore to the best of our ability, all the work which comes to us in our daily occupations.
3. As far as the ordinary duties allow, we shall endeavour to devote a portion of our time each day to some definite work which may help to prepare for His coming.
4. We shall seek to make *Devotion, Steadfastness and Gentleness* prominent characteristics of our daily life.
5. We shall try to begin each day with a short period devoted on the asking of His blessing upon all that we try to do for Him and in His name.
6. We regard it as our special duty to try to recognise and reverence greatness, in whomsoever shown, and to strive to cooperate as far as we can with

those whom we feel to be spiritually our superiors.

J. Krishnamurti (*Alcyone*) is the head of the Order and Mrs. Annie Besant is its Protector.

Officers are appointed for each country consisting of a National Representative—the chief officer in the country and an organising Secretary or Secretaries. There are no rules and no subscription, the expenses being met by donations. Each member on sending four annas worth of stamps to the Organising Secretary receives a certificate of membership, list of officers, card and a pamphlet on the work of the order. The badge of the order is a silver five-pointed star, in the form of a pin, stud, broach or pendant. These may be obtained by V.P.P. from one of the Organising Secretaries for one rupee each, and members are requested to wear them as much as possible. National Representatives wore a gold star. The colour of the order is light blue, and a ribbon of that colour may be worn with the badge if desired. Purple is the colour of a higher branch of the Order into which admission is only obtained by an invitation conveyed through its head.

The Organising Secretaries for India are Rai Iqbal Narain Gupta, M.A., LL.B., Ganna Geha, Benares City, United Provinces, Don Fabrizio Ruspoli, Headquarters, Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras.

The *Alcyone* cult was the chief cause of the trouble in the Central Hindu College. "The Order of the Rising Sun," which later was changed to the "Star of the East," was being assiduously introduced in the college by G.S. Arundale, the Principal, in spite of the protests of the Board of Trustees. The latter were strong in numbers and influence and so the movement failed in the college, and the college itself was lost to Theosophy at the end of 1911 or beginning of 1912. The High School in Mandanapalle which was taken over some time ago by the Theosophical Society will,



it is rumoured, be raised to a college and those workers who left the Central Hindu College, Benares, have gone there. For this purpose Mrs. Besant has this year been re-elected President of the Society. At Adyar there is an Oriental library for the use of students, a depot for the sale of Theosophical books and magazines, a shrine room devoted to the masters, and residential quarters for the workers and students.

It may be observed that a suspicion was at one time attached to the Society that it was secretly concerning itself with politics, and it was presumed that real work of this kind was being carried on in the Esoteric Section, which is a much smaller body and its proceedings are secret. In 1905 Colonel Olcott, as already noted, complained about the watching to which he and his party were subjected by the authorities. About the year 1906 Mrs. Besant herself paved out way that many complained that she did not have interest in politics, that she told them she would only work for the spiritual advancement. In her original written statement in the civil suit she claimed that she hold back the student population of India from participation in the plots of extremists and sought to inspire them with loyalty to the Empire. She also churned that she put an end to the secret drilling of boys and the collection of arms in Maharashtra during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. Perhaps there was not much foundation for the impression that politics might have been discussed in the Esoteric Section, for if it were so, it is most unlikely that G. Narayana Ayyar, who had made so many exposures, would have failed to mention it, especially when Mrs. Besant paraded her loyalty in Court. At one time, Mrs. Besant was very much opposed to social reform, the leaders of which movement feared that she would put back the country half a century, but recently she appeared as an ardent advocate

of social reform and delivered a course of lectures on it in the Victoria Public Hall, Madras. It is impossible to say how far this Society is connected with politics. So far as the bulk of the members are concerned, there is no doubt that they have no connection with them at all. Some are real believers in Theosophy pure and simple, and some are "cranks" of various descriptions, and persons live at the Theosophical headquarters because, they enjoy there, a total freedom from restraint in connection with their morals and habits. Mrs. Besant herself dabbles considerably in politics and is now doing so more than ever. She has started a newspaper, the *Commonweal*, which is devoted to a fighting form of politics; and has also taken over the *Madras Standard*, which is now issued under the title of *New India*. She is a woman of great ability, with an inordinate love of power. Her influence on public opinion is on the wane owing to the growing unpopularity of Theosophy among certain sections of the Hindus and she is undoubtedly throwing herself more energetically than usual into politics in order to regain her influence.

So far as is known she does not use the Society to any extent as a political engine. If she does she has managed to conceal the fact with great subtlety and what political work she has done she appears to have done openly.

A brief account of Mrs. Besant's career from her arrival in India in 1893 up to the latter half of 1914, is given in the history of the Theosophical Society prepared in the Madras Criminal Investigation Department by Mr. H.E. Williams, and dated 1st November, 1914.

1. One of the original rules of the Theosophical Society is that "politics, as a topic of conversation or discussion among the members, must be avoided." It is this rule that Mrs. Besant has lately been seeking to dispense with. She herself has taken a direct and active interest in politics since

about the middle of 1914. Up to that time she had found sufficient scope for her activities in the propaganda of the Theosophical Society and in her own intrigues to obtain headship and monopoly of power in it. In 1907 she became President on the death of Colonel Olcott, and restored to the Society, against her given pledge, the notorious Mr. Leadbeater, who had been expelled from it on account of prederastic practices. With his assistance she started a new venture, the two sons of G. Narayana Ayyar, the elder of whom was proclaimed as "Alcyone," the Supreme Teacher, or Messiah. In connection with this Messiah she formed the "Order of the Star in the East," the tenets of which are stated at page 26 of the Madras history. It will be noticed that they are entirely religious, and have nothing to do with politics. The Alcyone cult however alienated the Central Hindu College which Mrs. Besant had founded at Benares (page 26); while the disclosures made in the course of the suit brought against her and Leadbeater by the father of J. Krishnamurti (Alcyone), and in some connected defamation cases, were very damaging to the cause of Theosophy, and brought about apparently an estrangement of the American Theosophical Societies from the Indian Branch. Mrs. Besant's adherents became few in number, though still devoted in spirit. Finding herself checked in the activities in which she had hitherto flourished, she took seriously to politics in order to regain power and influence. Previously she had claimed not only that she was not herself interested in politics, but that in her relations with students in India she had done much good in inculcating loyalty towards the Empire and in diverting their minds from extremist plots. But shortly after the incidents narrated above she started the two papers, the "Commonweal," and "New India," which are entirely political. She did not apparently attempt to drag the Theosophical Society into politics with her, nor

to use it as a political engine. But she has always been anxious, as will appear later, not to break with the society, or what is left of it on her side. Presumably she herself is largely dependent on its funds, which seem to be considerable. The remarks in this connection on page 27 of the Madras history should be read.

2. Now please read the Memorandum annexed to the Madras Government's letter No. 4496 Well, dated the 8th October, 1915, which gives a lucid and chronological account of Mrs. Besant's political propaganda from July 1914 when she started "New India" down to that date.

Starting with the two first avowed objects of the Theosophical Society, and conveniently putting aside the already exploded third: helped also by her own long and enthusiastic championship of Hinduism and Indian civilization (see page 22 of the Madras history): and known, finally, throughout India as an active promoter of oriental education, she had no difficulty in commanding instant attention among Indians to her cause, which was, naturally and inevitably, that of Home Rule for India. In the early stages Mrs. Besant professed loyalty to the British Government and advocated political agitation for self-government after the war, but in course of time abandoned both these positions and throughout her speeches and writings her rhetoric bursts forth in passionate diatribes against the British and British rule. The almost invariable line of argument is to trace the glories of India under the Mauryas and the Moguls and down to the Maratha Confederacy, which apparently to her mind marks the end of Indian history. Under indigenous rule India was immensely rich and prosperous, free and systematically and skillfully governed. Under England, India is oppressed, famine and poverty stricken, and drained dry to enrich the ruling race. She drags in also all the ordinary cries, such as

army commissions, separation of executive and judicial functions, Arms Act treatment of Indians in railway carriages, etc., and points the arguments with a skill and veneer peculiarly her own. In response to a friendly remonstrance from the Private Secretary to the Governor of Madras, she said that she would try to avoid contentious topics, but needless to say, made no effort to keep her promise (about July 1915).

3. In an article published on the 14th September, 1915, headed "Home Rule for India" she definitely began her agitation for self-government, choosing as her text the opening words of Krishna in the second discourse of the Bhagavad Gita:

"Whence hath this objection be fallen thee in this perilous strait, un-Aryan (ignoble) heavenn-closing, inflamous. Yield not to impotence. O Partha, it do not befit thee: Shake off this paltry faintheartedness, stand up. Parantapa (conqueror of foes)."

The words, in their original context, are, of course, an encouragement to the sagging spirit of Arjuna to battle with his own kinsmen. Used as they were by Mrs. Besant, to the persons to whom she appealed, they amount to nothing less than an incitement to revolt, and, if necessary, to bloodshed.

In an article dated 25th September, 1915, Mrs. Besant gave a prospectus of her Home Rule League. She had managed Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji as President for the whole league, and Sir S. Subramania Ayyar, K.C.I.E., as President of the Indian Division. She hoped to get Sir William Wedderburn as President of the English Division, and to secure the support and co-operation of the Congress.

4. In sending up the case the Madras Government proposed to deport Mrs. Besant from India under the Defence of India Rules, but submitted the proposal first to

the Government of India. The Government of India replied, on 10th November, 1915, that Sir William Wedderburn seemed to have dissociated himself from the movement at any rate for the duration of the war and, with Sir K.G. Gupta, had issued a memorandum inconsistent with Mrs. Besant's scheme. They preferred to wait until the next meeting of the Indian Congress was over. This decision was taken in Council, and Sir Henry Wheeler's note of 26th October, 1915 followed by the notes of Hon'ble Members should be read. Special attention is invited to the Hon'ble Sir Sankaran Nair's note of 4th November, 1915.

5. As the Congress of 1915 (held at Bombay) drew near the Bombay Government anticipated trouble, and, in their letter dated 9th December, 1915 proposed to the Government of India that either Mrs. Besant should be informally dissuaded from attending, or, if that course failed, a statutory order should be issued upon her from making speeches. The Government of India replied that, until the Congress was over, and its attitude towards Mrs. Besant's propaganda clear, they preferred to take no action that would enable her to pose as a martyr, but that if in her speeches she infringed the law the local Government could take 'steps against her under the Defence of India Rules or any other enactment.'

6. An account of what happened at Bombay is given in Sir Henry Wheeler's note of 28th January, 1916. Briefly the All-India Congress Committee and the Council of the Moslem League rejected Mrs. Besant's proposal for the formation of a Home Rule League, but carried an amendment to refer the question to the Congress and the Moslem League. In Congress Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee moved a resolution (not unlike the subsequent memorandum of the 19 non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council) giving a large measure of Home Rule,

and Mrs. Besant, covering her previous defeat, enthusiastically scooped. The meeting of the Moslem League broke up in disorder, but a private meeting of the League afterwards authorized the formation of a committee to draw up a scheme of reforms. These events were discussed in Council, and as a result, the Madras Government were, informed of what had occurred, and told that if Mrs. Besant infringed the law, there was nothing to prevent its provisions being applied to her. Copies were sent to local Governments.

7. There is a great mass of papers, in this Department and in the Director, Criminal Intelligence's office, dealing with Mrs. Besant's activities from the beginning of 1910 to date. It will be convenient to extract and deal with separately, as much as possible:

- a. The history of the Home Rule League, and the events connected with it;
- b. The career of Mrs. Besant's papers, "New India" and "The Commonwealth"; and
- c. The proceedings of the Theosophical Society.

Before doing this I may mention some discussions and correspondence about two books by Mrs. Besant, entitled "How India wrought for Freedom," and "India: a Nation." These books are read in the Home Department in February and March by Sir Reginald Craddock and Sir Henry-Wheeler. The second book contains an elaborate paper constitution for India, every tier of which rests on an elective basis. The book attracted little attention in the Indian Press, and it was decided (on 11th March, 1910) to take no notice of them. On the 31st July the Secretary of State telegraphed that there was a rumour among Indians and Egyptians in Europe that the German Government was translating "India: a Nation" into various languages for propaganda

purposes. It seems to have been decided on the advice of the Director, Criminal Intelligence, (vide his note dated 30th August, 191(3)) to take no action in the direction of proscribing these books.

8. To revert to the Home Rule League—After the Bombay Congress of December 1915, Mrs. Besant seems to have pushed the project at once, in the Bombay Presidency, with the assistance of Tilak. Committees were also formed for Madras, Calcutta and Allahabad, but active efforts were made, for a time, in Bombay only. The Bombay Government circular letter No. S.D. 1721, dated 5th June, 1916 gives an excellent account of the movement in the early months of 1916 and may be read. From a cutting from the "Amrit Bazar Patrika," dated 11th July, 1916, it would appear that the movement was making less headway in Bengal than the writer would have liked. The league was inaugurated in Madras on the 3rd September, 1916 at a meeting over which Mrs. Besant presided. It was about this stage, apparently, that Mr. G.S. Arundale began to come conspicuously to the fore. This gentleman, and his sister had been teachers at Mrs. Besant Central Hindu College at Benares, Mr. Arundale being the Principal. They left that institution as a consequence of their assiduous devotion to "Alcyone" and the order of the "Star in the East," and went to the Theosophist institution at Madanapalle. Mr. Arundale now emerges as Organizing Secretary of the Home Rule League, and becomes, next to Mrs. Besant, the leading spirit in it. A cutting from "New India" in October, 1916 shows that by the 11th of the month the Home Rule League had 50 branches, mostly in the Madras and Bombay Presidencies. Mrs. Besant, had already, about the end of 1915, issued a series of pamphlets in support of Home Rule, and spent part of the year travelling, and making political speeches. She also instigated the formation of a branch of



the Home Rule League in England. This league had its nucleus in a group of Theosophists, and its promoters included Mrs. George Lansbury, Lady Dela Wan, and Lady Emily Lutyens. Its Secretary was a Major Graham Pole, an officer in a battalion of the North-umberland Fusiliers, apparently a Theosophist, and a solicitor who had done business for Mrs. Besant. He was shortly afterwards made by the Army Council to sever his connection with the movement. Another promoter of the English movement was Mr. C. Jinarajadasa, a Singhalese, who had been brought up in the Theosophical School. The first meeting was held on the 29th June in London: and subsequently Mr. Jinarajadasa delivered lectures in various places in England, leaving for India in the autumn. A good many mis-statements about India were made at these meetings, but there does not seem to have been anything very conspicuously objectionable said at any of them. Later on Mr. John Bonn and Mr. Frank Smith held meetings which they addressed on the subject of Home Rule for India. On the whole the agitation in England seems to have attracted little attention, after the first-meeting which was severely criticized in the "Times." On the 12th June, 1916 the Bombay Government telegraphed to the Government of India, explaining the situation, i.e. the growth of the Home Rule Leagues of Mrs. Besant and Tilak, and stating that they proposed to exclude the former from the Presidency under the Defence of India Rules. The Government of India approved, and the proposal was carried out. Mrs. Besant, of course, made many protests in her paper, and had no question asked about the incident in the House of Commons. Later in the year, about the end of October Mrs. Besant proposed going to Amraoti to hold a Theosophical Conference, but it was known that she intended also to hold a Home Rule meeting, the Chief Commissioner with

the concurrence of the Government of India, issued an order prohibiting her from entering the provinces. This occasioned a great outburst of wrath in "New India." Mrs. Besant raising the cry of religious intolerance for all it was worth. But, this seems to have had little effect. Mr. B.P. Wadia, one of the Adyar Theosophists (Madras history page 28) took Mrs. Besant's place, and delivered a political speech sufficiently 'objectionable to justify to the full the order of exclusion passed on Mrs. Besant. The theme of the lecture was "Why we need Home Rule." He was subsequently prevented by the Government of Madras from delivering the same speech in Madras. Meanwhile Tilak was carrying on his Home Rule agitation, immensely stimulated by the success of his appeal to the High Court against the Security order passed against him by the District Magistrate of Poona.

The result of this year agitation on the Congress of 1916 was not as pronounced as might have been expected, although it was estimated that two-third of the delegates were followers of Tilak and Mrs. Besant. The Director, Criminal Intelligence's note on the Congress week at Lucknow requires to be read. Mrs. Besant induced Congress to lend countenance to the propaganda of local Home Rule Leagues and Committees, and it seems that the extremists are gaining ground, see Sir R. Craddock's note of 17th January, 1917.

Since then the Government of India have issued their circular letter, dated 20th March, 1917, and also telegraphed to the Secretary of State (18th May, 1917) proposing the issue of a communique on the Home Rule question. The latter proposal has been negative. The Bombay Government's letter No. 1834-96—Confidential, dated 22nd March, 1915, which crossed the Home Department circular, gives a disquieting account of the progress of the movement

under Tilak, Mrs. Besant and Arundale in the Bombay Presidency.

9. I now turn to "New India." On the 16th May, 1916, Sir Charles Cleveland drew the attention of the department to the tone of this paper—and showed that the brisk rebellion was inspiring it to worse excesses, especially as a Sinu Fiener. Mr. J.N. Cousins, had joined the staff. The Government of India were about to address the Government of Madras suggesting action under the Press Act, when the Madras Government took that action of their own accord (May 1916). "New India" immediately came out with a series of violent articles, generally headed "Bureaucracy in Excelsis" against, the order: and, as the tone of the paper showed no improvement, the Madras Government, in August, declared the security of Rs. 2,000 deposited by Mrs. Besant in May to be forfeited. They allowed the paper to proceed on fresh security of Rs. 10,000, and also demanded, security of Rs. 5,000 from the paper "Commonweal." The first 241 pages of Political A. October, 1916, Nos. 36-53, consist of extracts from "New India," compiled by the Government of Madras, and prefaced with a memorandum (the earlier part of this memorandum belongs to 1915, when the Madras Government proposed taking action under the Defence of India Act). There are also a memorandum and similar extracts from the "Commonweal." A list of the passages on the strength of which forfeiture was made is given at page 259, and the passages themselves on the following pages. The Madras High Court refused to interfere with the order or to let Mrs. Besant appeal to the Privy Council. On 30th September, 1916 (before the High Court's order) the Government of India reported to the Secretary of State that the tone of the paper was somewhat subdued.

10. Since December 1916, under His Excellency's orders extracts from "New India" have been made regularly in

the Director, Criminal Intelligence's Office. Through the first three months of the year the tone of the paper was comparatively mild. The available extracts are placed in a separate bundle.

There was a series of "Educative articles on Home Rule," in which Mrs. Besant goes back to her old theme of the excellence of government in ancient days. These were rather dull, and though their object, no doubt, was to excite comparison with the British Government to the latter's disadvantage, the theme was not expounded in an inflammatory style. There were two articles on under hired labour, one of which, entitled "Hell" was particularly violent in tone: and there was, I remember, a short paragraph, reporting a dacoity, which was headed simply "under British Raj," distinctly objectionable device. Mrs. Besant's review of the Congress of 1916, headed "India Awake;" contained two inflammatory passages, one a panegyric on Tilak, and the other (the last paragraph) an ecstatic poem on liberty and Home Rule. She also became somewhat excited over schemes of Empire and Mr. Curtis, ride her article "The Great Conspiracy." She was very angry at His Excellency's reply to the Press deputation, and attacked him personally in her article on the subject. Otherwise her articles were mostly of the "Home Rule whole hogger" type, and, granted that is an intelligible policy, there is not much that can be urged against them. In March she wrote some articles about the Russian revolution, but these were not seriously objectionable. In the middle of March there was actually a whole week in which she produced nothing worthy of notice in her speeches or writings. In April she begins to become violent again. In an attack on the Viceroy's speech at Lahore she says "without Home Rule our industries will perish under the fierce heel of merchantile England." In one on Mr. Lloyd George's speech

at the American Club, she draw fresh inspiration from Russia, and ends "Does the Premier wish to free the peoples of all countries save those under Britain?" On 1st May she comes out with a scandalous attack on Sir Michael O' Dwyer, whom she compares with the Tsar, but considers to be more cruel in his methods. The last sentence of this article is meaningless except as a call to rebellion. By this time Russia seems to have carried Mrs. Besant away. In her article "Only if India be free, is the world set free," she talks as though the Russian and the British bureaucracy were on an exact par in tyranny and ends with a most passionate cry for freedom from bondage. An article labelled No. 9 protests violently against an order by the Government of Madras forbidding students from attending political meetings.

It ends with a positive threat that Mrs. Besant will herself undertake the political education of students. It was only a few months before in the course of an article on the prohibition of Sir Wadia's lecture in Madras that Mrs. Besant reiterated what she said that she had inculcated for twenty years, namely that students ought not to take part in political agitation. This is only one instance out of many of the lady's amazing somersaults. On the 23rd May in an article on Miss. Gmeiner of Delhi she says "..... with a reactionary Viceroy liberty of thought, speech and action are barred." Another objectionable article is at this moment under reference to the Burma Government.

11. As regards the Theosophical Society, there is not much to be wild. It has been shown that Mrs. Besant's principal lieutenants in her Home Rule campaign, Messrs. Arundale and Wadia, have been for years intimately connected with Theosophy. And that the branch of the league in England is practically a band of Theosophists. Until quite lately the Theosophical Society professed absolute

dissociation from politics, but from Madam Blavatsky onwards, its members have not been free from suspicion in this respect. Mrs. Besant, herself, as lately as 28th July, 1911 in "New India" said "No Theosophical Lodge must pass any resolution with regard to my exclusion from the Bombay Presidency, nor in support of me in my political difficulty with the Government. The Theosophical Society has no politics, and a large number of our fellows are Government servants. Any such resolution, passed by a Lodge, is unconstitutional and wholly against my wishes." This advice was not, however, kept by all the lodges. Many Theosophist lodges protested about her exclusion from the Central Provinces but this was not remarkable, as she was going there ostensibly to preside over a Theosophist Congress. Some Theosophists are, no doubt, opposed to Mrs. Besant taking part in politics, and one of them, Mrs. Klizabeth Levers, has left the Society, as a protest against the practical conversion of the English headquarters into a Home Rule for India League. Mrs. Besant herself, in an article in the "Theosophist" of November 1916, definitely broke with the old convention, and, claiming a supernatural revelation in her support,—which is an old device of hers—committed the Society to political propaganda. A report of the Madras Criminal Investigation Department dated the 10th January last shows that in the Madras Presidency Theosophical Lodges and centres of the Home Rule League are in many places identical. It seems that Mrs. Besant still relies largely on the Theosophical organisation, and she is probably unwilling also to break with some of her older associates in Theosophy, who are not interested in politics, but, perhaps, are useful to her pecuniarity. Otherwise there seems no point in the revelation, which only a hide-bound Theosophist could read without a smile.

There are passages in the Criminal Intelligence

Department reports, both from England and India which raise a strong suspicion that the German Government have been making use of the society for political purposes and for purposes of espionage. The large proportion of enemy subjects in the Adyar Colony in 1914 is noticeable. The report at page 40 of Director, Criminal Intelligence's file 6 should be read, and also the extract report at page 123 of file 3088, Part II, in this connection.

12. The present, situation has been fully anticipated in the notes and discussions about Mrs. Besant. She could probably have been deported with little trouble in 1915 when the Madras Government proposed that course. Now, it is a question whether she had not so far identified herself with the cause of Home Rule, and so far instilled into the minds of a large section of the public that Home Rule is bound to come very soon, that any sterner measures taken against her would be widely interpreted as an international blow to Home Rule, and to the political hopes of many. Had it been possible, as the Government of India wished, to make a statement of their intentions in the direction of constitutional reforms, before proceeding, to deal with Mrs. Besant, and "New India," the difficulty would have been avoided. On the other hand the local Governments, especially those of Madras and Bombay, are in a position to foretell with greater certainty than the Government of India what the effect of repressive action on Mrs. Besant is likely to be. The Bombay Government and the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces do not seem to have suffered much as the result of excluding her home territories, and it may be that to deport her altogether would even now raise no very great storm.

Perhaps she would submit, as Hon'ble Member has suggested to a pre-censorship of her writings and speeches, as an alternative to a fresh forfeiture of the "New India"

security, and such further action as Government might see fit to take. Such censorship could not very well be used to modify her political programme of immediate and complete Home Rule: it could only be directed against her inflammatory and abusive arguments. It might be suggested to the Madras Government, who knows Mrs. Besant well, and could say what the chances of success are, and whether they could undertake the experiment. The Madras Government might also be asked what action, if any, they would suggest for dealing with Arundale and Wadia.

If the Madras and Bombay Governments, however, maintain that it would not be safe to take strong measures, and the Madras Government, in addition is unwilling to attempt to come to terms with her by establishing a censorship, the Government of India will have a good case to put before the Secretary of State, with a renewed demand for an early publication of their policy.

### **Charlatanism**

From the beginning Olcott had been President and Judge Vice President, while Madame Blavatsky herself had only held the position of Correspondent Secretary. When she died, Judge cabled from America to the London Office, "Do nothing till I come." Within a few days after his arrival in London, he produced two messages which he declared had been sent by the Master Morya, Madam Blavatsky's own special monitor. Mrs. Besant accepted the documents as genuine, and publicly proclaimed in a great meeting in London that there could be no doubt about the existence of the Mahatmas as communications had been received from them since the death of Madam Blavatsky. These messages continued to arrive, Mr. Judge's wisdom and the high place which he ought to have in Society was their constant burden. Mrs. Besant was convinced of their genuineness.



A little later Mrs. Besant went to India. When all the documents were laid before Olcott, it became clear to him that Judge had forged them, and that he had abstracted from Madam Blavatsky's rooms in London. The hand-made rice-paper on which they were written and the seal with which most of them were sealed; Mrs. Besant examined all the evidence and recognised Judge's guilt. Olcott then wrote to Judge on the 12th of February, giving him the option of (a) retiring from all the offices he held in the Theosophical Society, and leaving Olcott to make a general public explanation or (b) having a Judicial Committee convened and the whole of the proceedings made public. Judge refused to resign. It was therefore decided that all the documents should be placed in Mrs. Besant's hands, that she should preside over a judicial enquiry to be held at the Annual Convention in London in July, 1894, and that all the evidence should be published. This latter pledge was given in order to satisfy Indian Theosophists who were insistent that the fraud should be exposed.

But while the Judicial Committee along with Olcott Judge and Mrs. Besant, after serious deliberations, came to the conclusion that it was contrary to Theosophic principles to decide who was guilty or not and it was further agreed that the evidence which had been gathered should not be published. Clearly the inner history of this most shameful transaction is that Judge, who knew that had happened in Madras in 1884 and much else, threatened that, if he were exposed, he would expose everybody, but agreed to work with the Colonel and Mrs. Besant on condition that the affairs should be up in such a way that his character should not suffer. All this the leader endeavoured to carry out.

But many Theosophists felt that such immorality must not be condoned and concealed. One of the officials Mrs. W.R. Gorn Old, therefore, urged the leaders at the London

headquarter to have the evidence published. He was told that was impossible: Mrs. Besant had burned all the documents! Like Judge in Madras she had found fire a most convenient means for getting rid of inconvenient evidence. But she did not know that before the incriminating documents were handed over to her in India facsimile copies of all had been taken by Mr. Old. Even when he made this fact known at headquarters and offered to hand the copies over for publication, the leaders refused to act. Then Mr. Old disgusted beyond measure because the officials would not carry out the promise made in India, that all the evidence should be published, and were determined as far as possible to hide the fraud, resigned his position and left the society. He then handed over the facsimiles of the documents to his friend Mr. Edmund Garrett; and the whole story was published in the "Westminster Gazette," October 29-November 8, 1894. It was hereafter republished in book form under the title "Isis Very much Unveiled."

Neither Mrs. Besant nor Colonel Olcott ever attempted to deny any of the statements made in the Westminster Gazette." The whole fabric of gross and shameful fraud and concealments stands undeniable.

### **Spiritualistic Trickery**

Extracts from Jiodern Religious Movements in India by J.K. Farquhar, M.A. (1915).

"The chief facts are given in a written statement by Dr. Hartmann from which we quote the following of the existence of a movable back to the Shrine and a filled-up aperture in the wall, none of knew anything, and although superficial examinations were made, they divulged nothing because to make a thorough examination, it would have been necessary to take the shrine down, and we were prevented from doing this by the superstitious awe with

which Dr. Damodar K. Jiavalankar regarded the Shrine, and who looked upon every European who dared to touch or handle the "sacred" shrine as a desecration.

As about the time when Major-General Norzan sent his invitation to Mr. Patterson to come to headquarters, that examination was made, and it was found that the back of the Shrine could be moved, and on moistening the wall behind the Shrine with a wet cloth, it was found that an aperture had existed, which had been plastered up.

I must confess that it seemed to me that if at that inopportune moment this new discovery, to which I then alluded in the papers (see *Madras Mail*), would have been made public, it would have had a bad effect on the public mind.

A gentleman who was present, and who shared my opinions, was of the opinion that the shrine had been too much desecrated to be of any more use, and he turned the shrine in my presence.

What they found was that the back of the shrine consisted of three movable panels and that there had been an aperture in the thin brick partition behind; so that there had actually been direct communication between Madam Blavatsky's room and the interior of Shrine, precisely as Madam Coulom had said. The aperture had been plastered up when Madam Blavatsky sailed for Europe. Among those who examined the Shrine and made the discovery were Dr. Hartmann, Mr. Judge and Mr. T. Vijayaraghava Charloo (known as Annada); and it was Judge who burned the Shrine.

Mr. C.W. Leadbeater, who had been curate of the Church of England became a Theosophist in 1884 and since that time with the exception of a break of some four years, he had been one of the officials of the Society. He has also become notorious because of his occult investigations. It is

unnecessary to go into details concerning this particularly unsavoury person. The following extracts will suffice.

### **From Modern Religious Movement in India**

The third result had been a crop of lawsuits in Madras. The chief case arose from the fact that a Madras Brahmin, named C. Narayan Iyer, handed over his two sons to Mrs. Besant to be educated. The elder of these boys, J. Krishnamurthi, is called Alcyone in Mr. Leadbeater's occult investigations and he is said to have been chosen as the vehicle of the coming Christ. Mrs. Besant placed the boys under Mr. Leadbeater's care in the matter of their studies. The father objected on the ground that Mr. Leadbeater is an immoral man. Mrs. Besant consented to keep the boys apart from Mr. Leadbeater, but put them again under his care, and finally refused to separate them from him. The father then raised an action against her in the Madras Courts, and won his case. Mrs. Besant appealed, but lost again. She then appealed to the Privy Council in England; and the original case has been set aside on a technical point. Mrs. Besant brought law suits for defamation of character against two citizens of Madras, but both were dismissed. In the course of the four trials in Madras a great deal of very unfavourable evidence was produced against Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant. The following is an extract from the judgment in the first case:

"Mr. Leadbeater admitted in his evidence that he had held and even now holds, opinions which I need only describe as certainly immoral and such as to unfit him to be the tutor of the boys, and, taken in conjunction with his professed power to detect the approach of impure thoughts, render him a highly dangerous associate for children."

In one case the Judge declared that Mrs. Besant had defended Mrs. Leadbeater's immoral teaching. In another

the Judge said Mrs. Besant had not shown common honesty in her dealings with the father of the boys.

### **Secessions from the Society**

Extract from *Modern Religious Movements in India* by J.N. Furquhar M.A. (1915).

"In January 1909 Mrs. Besant announced in the *Theosophist* that the general council had decided to allow Mr. Leadbeater to return to the society.

About the same time a defence of his teaching, written by an American Theosophist named Van Hoak, was circulated in the Society. Two of the English leaders, backed by many members, appealed to the General Council to withdraw the document, but they refused. The result was that, under the leadership of Mr. G.R.S. Mead, a body of some 700 British Theosophists, including nearly all the cultured and influential members in the country and a number in other lands left the Society.

There was unrest and turmoil in the Hindu College, Benares, too. Students protested seriously for sometime, but got no redress. Finally, they were able to make things so hot for Mrs. Besant's personal followers and the teaching staff, that they resigned as a body and left. Mrs. Besant has thus lost nearly all her influence in the citadel of Hinduism.

There were also many members of the Society in India, who resigned, probably as many as 500; but she still retained her hold over the great bulk of the Indian membership.

A few acceded in England and in America. On account of a sharp disagreement between Mrs. Besant and Herr steiner, the German leader, all the lodges in Germany, consisting of 2,400 members, and several in Switzerland, were driven out of the movement. Germany has thus been forced to form a fresh organisation. The new name is the Anthroposophical Society.

**[Note: It would appear, however, that her influence is again gaining ground at Benares. Her visit to the college in April 1916 was a success if we may judge from the fact that a dozen or more representatives gave her a hearty send off on 30th April, 1916. The Society is just opening (June 1916) a Girls' School in Benares under Miss Arundale (Adyar Bulletin, June 1916).**

# 3

## HER ROLE IN FREEDOM MOVEMENT THROUGH HOME RULE

Annie Besant was a true Indian in the true sense of the word, who really worked very hard to bring renaissance in India. We must recall the vision which Dr. Besant had for India's future, "I see her, our mighty motherland, hand in hand with Britain, leading in the future in evolution of humanity, in all that is sublimest in Religion, all that is most splendid in Philosophy, all that is most beautiful in Art, all that is most useful in science.

Gandhiji called her 'Servant in India' on account of her vast contribution to Indian politics, religion, culture, education, philosophy and sociology. By doing social reforms she made ground for political action. Through social reforms she paved her way for political action. Though politics was not her field in the beginning but after working for India's spiritual, religious, educational and social reconstruction she entered into politics in 1913. She has again and again said that she entered politics to save the youth of India. She created a sense of national self respect among people, based on a real appreciation of the cultural

greatness of India. She also made people realize that the root cause of their economic backwardness was the exploitative policies of the British Government and therefore she insisted upon Swadeshi.

On the beginning of the First World War, Annie Besant said that the price of the victory of allied Nations should be accompanied by India's freedom. She called a meeting of the Congress leaders in 1915 where she used all her forces to bring together the two sections of the Indian National Congress which had been divided at Surat in 1907.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak represented these two factions. There were some major differences. Annie Besant made efforts to bring them together on a common platform of the "All India Home Rule League."

The leaders were doubtful initially about the campaign they did together and in 1916 at Lucknow the two factions of the Congress reached a pact and Congress was unified again. Dr. Besant decided to establish Home Rule League independently. Accordingly, the League was established at Madras in September, 1916.

Two Home Rule Leagues came into existence by 1916. Both cooperated with each other and divided among themselves their areas of activities. While Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Berar were left under the care of the League established by B.G. Tilak, the rest of the territories of India were to be looked after by the League run by Mrs. Annie Besant.

The leaders of the two leagues, Tilakji and Dr. Besant toured all over India and established branches of the League at various places and attracted liberal leaders like Moti Lal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru, who became its members.

Dr. Besant was assisted in her political work and agitation for self-government by her weekly newspapers,



The *Commonweal* and *New India*. The creed which she had formulated for her Home Rule League was that Indians should be free in their country, they should be governed by men freely elected by them, they should have control over their defence, economy and construction of their social infrastructure.

She desired dominion status for India. She said "I desire Home Rule for India because I love India and Indians, as I love no other country, no other race on earth." She criticised the British Government for its injustice towards India.

She awakened the whole of India with her powerful ideas. Consciousness of even the rural people was awakened to the need for independence.

This led Gandhiji to remark, "It is Dr. Besant who has awakened India from her deep slumber and I pray that she may live long to witness a free India."

Mrs. Besant and Tilak said that self-government be granted to India within the British Dominions during the course of war itself if possible, otherwise after the war.

The plea of both Dr. Besant and Tilakji was that a self-governed India would be an asset to Britain during the war and even after the war. But the Government could not tolerate the activities of the Home Rule League. And so in 1916 a case was registered against Tilak and the same year Mrs. Besant was asked to pay rupees two thousand as security for the newspaper, *New India*, which was confiscated: She was forced to close the newspaper. She was also externed by the Government of Bombay and Central Provinces. In 1917 the Government of Madras interned her.

Soon after, protests were organised throughout the country and 'Home Rule' became a live issue for the whole of India. Mrs. Besant had brought India on the political

map of the world. *The repressive policies of Government, instead of breaking the movement, made it more popular.* Muslim leaders like Jinnah also joined the Home Rule League, the Congress sent protest letter to Government and even suggestion of Satyagraha arose from its platform. The British Government chose to compromise and Montague's Declaration was announced in the House of Commons on August 20, 1917.

Annie Besant was unanimously elected president of the Calcutta Congress session in 1917 after having been released unconditionally. Congress adopted Home Rule as its goal in 1918. But with the end of war and Montague-Chelmsford reforms in 1919 Home Rule Movement lost much of its fervour. The Home Rule Movement closed a chapter of the Indian Independence Movement. The movement failed to achieve its objective. Yet, it made a solid contribution to the national movement. The declaration of Mr. Montague and the Act of 1919 which introduced partial responsible governments in British Provinces was its one result. The movement kept the fire of independence burning in people's hearts and also prepared them for the Movements to be carried out in the future.

She brought herself into conflict with some ardent nationalists of India when she criticised Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. However, Annie Besant was worried about the future of India.

After several meetings of the leading politicians the 'Commonwealth of India' bill was drafted and agreed upon in 1925. By it India was to be made full Dominion, but with the reservation of the two departments of Army and Foreign Affairs. The bill though accepted by the labour party lapsed in the British Parliament.

Between 1925-1929, Mrs. Besant endeavoured to bring different political parties and leaders together. She

continued her campaign with unabated vigour through her writings and speeches till the end of her life in 1933. She wanted India to be free not only from British Rule but from all her weaknesses and to regain her past glory.

### **Theosophy at the back of the Congress**

Following extracts will reveal how Annie Besant utilised the infrastructure available in the Theosophical Society and moulded the Theosophists as comrades in the work by concealing their identities.

Extract from the closing lecture of the Theosophical Convention of 1909 delivered by Anni Besant, printed in India's Uplift.

"As both (i.e. Theosophical Society in India and the Central Hindu College, Benares, have helped—as I shall show you—to lay the foundation of the great movement which is beginning today to build India into a nation.

"The National Congress was founded by English and Indian Theosophists, working hand-in-hand. The first meeting which Buggeated it was held at a Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar; it was under the shelter of the banner of Theosophy, when Mr. Hume and other Indian Theosophists, were present, that the National Congress took birth. And in those early days, its life came from the inert members of the Theosophical Society! It was the Hindu Theosophists who worked in the early days before the Congress was popular, later, it grew popular and strong; but it ought not to forget the days of its infancy, when it was cradled and nursed in the Theosophical Society, until it was able to stand and run alone. And as regards the Swadeshi Movement: the Colonel preached it and I preached it when it was very unpopular; and when everybody laughed at us, saying: "You will never get the people of this country to care." To princes and people I

preached it wherever I went, and, always from the economic standpoint. It had then no echo in Bengal. It was not until the lash fell upon them in the partition of Bengal that Bengalis—the most anglicised of all the Indian peoples—were stirred into activity and the Swadeshi movement, as a political weapon rather than an economic reform, was triumphantly proclaimed everywhere. But some of us, who are older and within the pale of Theosophy, remember how the seed was sown. While we admire the vigour of to-day, we do not see why the poor Theosophist should be shut out. So of that third great movement also you find the beginning in the inert Hindu Theosophist!

(Note:

First Movement "Industrial Exhibition held at Bombay."

Second Movement "National Congress"

Third Movement "Swadeshi Movement.")

Extract from "For India's Uplift" a collection of speeches and writings of Annie Besant.

"There can be no doubt that Theosophy first sowed the seeds of a rapid nationalisation if not of an unqualified unification of the different races inhabiting India."

Extract from an article by Annie Besant in the 'Indian Review' for October, 1913:

"The work done by the Theosophical Society in India has had as a general result the revival of the Kaatern i'aitha, the checking of the destructive effect of missionary zeal, the establishment of an Indian Ideal of Education, this inspiring of self respect in Indians; of pride in their past evoking hope in their future, and the creation of the national spirit now throbbing throughout the land. The National Congress, the Mother and trainer of India a future parliament, had its conception in the Theosophical Society, as the late Harendra Nath Sen, present on the occasion,

and one of the preliminary committees related in the Indian Mirror. He wrote one of the most successful of the Annual Conventions of the Theosophical Society was held at Adyar, Madras, during the Christmas week of 1889, 1904, 1919. The delegates who attended the Convention were most of them men who socially and intellectually, are the leaders of the society in which they move in the different parts of the country. When the Convention closed, and the delegates broke up to return to their homes or to every day work, a dozen or so of their members, as well as a few Madras Hindu gentlemen, met by private arrangement at the house of one of the best known and most esteemed citizens of Madras. The first programme of the Congress was drafted and the organisation sketched out.

The provisional Committee was formed at this meeting.

Following are the extracts:

(i) Page 197 of the Adyar Bulletin dated 15th July, 1917.

"Since the Bulletin eschews that department of Theosophical theories which is in Politics, those interested in knowing further about Indian affairs are referred to New India....."

Extract from the Presidential Address of the Theosophical Society convention of 1916 held at Lucknow.

"It is the moulds into which nations are to be cast for a new civilization that are preparing; it is them which we are summoned to help in its shaping. Away then with fear and with the shreds of futile shibboleths. Away with a false neutrality; which is but a cloak for indefiniteness of thought and irresolution in action. The Theosophical society is called to take its share in the mighty world creation to spread its ideas through the moral atmosphere, to work them into physical forms for the new civilization. I summon you, my Brethren to set you hands with me to this great task."

(ii) Extract from the Theosophist for November, 1916.

**“The big work is clear—to prepare the world for a civilisation based on brotherhood.... But in this great new departure of the Theosophical Society, the taking of a leading part in the world movement which prepare for the coming of the world Teacher, I think it well to depart from house practice, and to say quite definitely that it is his wish that this new departure should be mationeal.”**

**(iii) Extract from For India’s Uplift page 256.**

**“All these good labourers—philanthropic, educational spiritual, social, political—should understand that they are comrades in one cause....”**

The above three extracts gives the Theosophical point of view as interpreted by Mrs. Besant. In the bulletin for May, 1917 we find a command issued purporting to come from the Great ones through Mrs. Besant that every member of the Esoteric Section should join in the work. But they were to organise themselves so as to conceal their identity.

Mr. Johann Van Maher, an enthusiastic Theosophist, who had defended Mrs. Besant against an attack by the Bishop of Madras but who afterwards left the Adyar because the society had identified itself with politics addressed an open letter to Sir Subramania Ayyer which was printed in Justice of August 31st, 1917.

He shows how at Mrs. Besant’s instance, the Executive Council modified a rule of the Theosophical Society to allow of the annual convention being held in places other than Madras and Benares alternately and that ever since this, the convention has always followed the National Congress Sessions over India and has been invariably held simultaneously with and at the same places as the meetings of the political body.

Extracts from the letter of Mrs. Besant in reply to the Government offer to relax the internment orders in regard to their Theosophical work. Mrs. Besant:

**"I am unable to discriminate between any activities..... the Theosophical Society..... can and ought to stand for the sacred right of free speech for all opinions..... it has therefore allied itself in this struggle in entente cordiale with the National Congress, the Moslem League and the Home Rule League in one solid body unites, in resistance to autocracy and in defence of the liberty of the people and I as President of the Theosophical Society will conclude no separate peace."**

From the Magazine entitled "Brothers of the Star" for April, May and June, 1916, the aim appears to be to capture Muhammadanism as well. The advent of the 12th Imam or religious leader is foreshadowed. His name is Muhammad, son of Imam Hasan Askari, the 11th Imam. He is variously entitled Mahdi, Sahab-ul-Arnar or Akhirulzaman. He was born 255 A.H., and disappeared to appear once more when the world is ready to receive him. The Sanussia movement in Central Africa where Islamiara is reviving and spreading to an enormous extent in all part of the preparation. On December 28th a star group van also formed at Busra City, Persian Gulf. In the number for June, 1910, members are asked to seize this opportunity of bringing the sublime new to the notice (of Muhammadans) by utilising these special Muslim issues (April, May, June). Each member could at least leave a copy at the house of a prominent Muhammadan or place a copy in a Muslim Club or Library etc.

## 4

### ACCOLADES AND CRITICISM

Annie Besant bounced back quickly from her despondence and ill-health. She again took over her editorial duties on the *Commonweal* and *New India*, though leaving Telang as manager of the latter. Wadia also resumed his editorial pen with such customary fervour and recklessness that within a few weeks she felt forced to apologise publicly and personally to everyone, including the *Madras Mail*, for one of his unsigned letters in which he had seemed to suggest that freedom of speech should be denied to certain Englishmen when they expressed extreme opinions on the political situation. Yet with her customary loyalty she protected Wadia by not giving the name of the offender. For the attacks of the British irreconcilables on the government had continued in both India and Britain, though without much success. Montague, just before his departure for India, had defended the official action in the Commons, and Lord Sydenham's speech in the Lords calling for all the papers on the Besant case had proved so weak and unimpressive that he had withdrawn his own motion.

Mrs. Besant's first step in her new campaign was to



set out on another of her whirlwind speaking tours, partly to propagandise for her Home Rule League, partly to prepare the ground for Montague's coming, and partly to work for her new National University plan. Wadia and Arundale accompanied her, as fellow martyrs. Because of the burden of her new responsibilities she appointed Arundale as her private secretary.

On the long swing which The three made through the north, including Bombay, Allahabad, Benares, and Calcutta, they were received with wild enthusiasm by the Indians, and "*Vande Mataram*" was sung everywhere as a sort of battle song. Annie freshened up her contacts with the Hindu leaders from her rival Home Ruler Tilak to Sarojini Naidu. At Allahabad its chief citizen, *Motilal Nehru*, now President of the local branch of the League, brought many of the other moderates, including his son, in with him, partly because they had been thoroughly displeased with the way Sastri had failed to take a stand in the crisis. Many of these, however, again including his son, as told in Jawaharlal's autobiography, resigned within a few months because of their equal dissatisfaction with the way things were going under Mrs. Besant.

She also cemented relations with Jinnah, President of her Bombay branch, and called on the dying Naoroji. Arundale, who accompanied her, recalled later in his biographical sketch how even the tremendous reception she got in Bombay was eclipsed by the "joy she felt at being able to pay homage" to India's G.O.M. and how thankful he "declared himself to be that the West had given the East so brilliant a leader."

Nor did she forget the rising Gandhi, in spite of their little tiffs. Both he and she had birthdays in October. When she had written to inform him of the congratulatory resolution passed by the citizens of Madras on his birthday,

he had replied with a note of thanks, saying he had not heard of the action before, whereupon she had written gracefully in *New India*: "We do not expect M.K. Gandhi to remember anything about himself; he is too full of the helping of others. But we, who profit by his selfless devotion, cannot share his forgetfulness. That which is noble in him would be ignoble in us." After all, Gandhi had already said of her, "She has made Home Rule a mantra in every cottage" in India, let alone the towns and cities.

On the other hand, when Ernest Wood, during the internment, had called on Gandhi at Ahmedabad to try to persuade him to join the other Indian leaders in backing the new Society for the Promotion of National Education, Gandhi had refused because he could not approve of a scheme which glorified the fruits of modern science and appealed to young Indians to develop modern industrial and commercial organisations and factories instead of handwork and cottage industries. So Wood, leaving the other surrounded by the dozens of pictures of Tolstoy in his study, went on to establish a new college at Hyderabad in the Sind, under Theosophical auspices. Nevertheless, Gandhi's Monster Petition for Home Rule continued to circulate, and by November had collected close to 700,000 signatures.

Tributes to Annie Besant in other forms also poured in, all duly printed with attractive photographs in the *Theosophist* and the *Herald of the Star*. Bernard Shaw wrote "Mrs. Besant's Passage through the Fabian Society," Lansbury discussed "Mrs. Besant as a Politician," Sir S. Subramania Iyer extolled "Mrs. Besant as an Empire Builder," minor Theosophists wrote on "Mrs. Besant and Co-Freemasonry," "Mrs. Besant as a Religious Teacher, and "The Contribution of Mrs. Besant to Psychology," and Jinarajadasa even contributed an article to *New India* on

"Mrs. Besant's Poems," three of which, written in 1875, he had discovered ten years before in a book of hymns edited by Charles Voysey.

The Secretary of State for India, landing in Bombay on November 9, was fortunate in having such a national heroine on his side, for the Anglo-Indians, with the exception of the Viceroy, who of course had to back the home government, had banded together to make his tour of exploration as difficult and unpleasant as possible. But in Madras Mrs. Besant had already lectured in Gokhale Hall on the proposed Congress-Moslem League Scheme of Reforms, and another public meeting had been held there to protest against the "*European Clique*." She had addressed an editorial, "What Will You Say to Mr. Montague?," in the *Commonweal* to the deputation she was to be on in Delhi, trying to impress it with two main points: it should make clear to Montague that in spite of Indian illiteracy a union between the educated classes and the vast masses was taking place, and that through such means as *Swadeshi* and the use of vernaculars a political awakening was occurring in the villages and a strong national spirit had come into being; and it should stress the Congress-League scheme as a carefully worked out plan which "contains the germ of our ultimate political emancipation." Apparently already concocting a scheme of her own for future action, she reminded her readers of the way she had got around official obstacles and barriers when the Prince and Princess of Wales had come to the Central Hindu College.

Racing up to Delhi, she joined the joint deputation of the National Congress, the *Moslem League*, and the two *Home Rule Leagues* which met with Montague and Viceroy on Monday, the 26th November. The Congress-League representatives presented their address to Montague both

orally and in writing, and the Home Rule groups presented theirs in writing. Mrs. Besant was of course a signatory. Both her newspapers carried factual records of the meeting, but the Commonwealth remarked that she and Tilak were "*specially heard*." It was not, however, until thirteen years later that the public learned of the typically Besantine methods that Annie had employed to get a personal hearing for her cause. Montague, who was a canny fellow, not to be hoodwinked as to the true purpose behind the repressive measures taken by the Indian administration for his "protection," kept a candid and careful diary during his trip, consisting of memoranda to be sent back to Lloyd George in London. Not intended for publication, these notes were nevertheless published in 1930 by the family of the deceased Montague because of their oppositeness of the Round Table discussions then being held on the still unsolved Indian problem.

Although calling Mrs. Besant an "amusing old thing," the diary clearly reveals the Secretary's immense respect for her character and her influence. She was "amusing" because, knowing perfectly well that the private interview was scheduled to be held in Chelmsford's room, since the government always took good care that Montague should never see anybody of importance without him, she surprised him by turning up in his tent and sitting there until he had finished dressing. When he politely pointed out her mistake, she bundled him into her motorcar and used the time on the way to the Viceroy's house to explain how the government had prevented the Indian people from giving him a warm welcome and to implore him and Chelmsford to come to the meeting of the Congress.

Thus softened up in advance, Montague described the later private conference at six that evening as "an interesting interview, if I ever had one." Mrs. Besant gave him the

whole history of the Home Rule League, explained how she felt it necessary to get hold of young boys for the cause and guaranteed that if the Home Rule policy were properly carried out they would forsake anarchy and come over to the side of constitutional reform, and ended by assuring her two listeners solemnly that India must have the control of the Executive and the power of the purse. Fighting shy of the financial problems raised by the others by pleading that she was not a financial expert, she calmly "kept her silvery, quiet voice, and really impressed me tremendously." The more Montague heard, the more he mourned. But he also diagnosed her weakness. "If only the Government had kept this old woman on our side! If only she had been handled well from the beginning! If only her vanity had been appealed to."

At another later interview they further discussed *Home Rule*, elected majorities, the power of the purse, and her demand for the restriction of coercive legislation. At the end he still retained his admiration for her, but felt that she lacked practicality. In an earlier entry he had remarked that when the Government had interned her he had been reminded of the *Shiva* who cut his wife into fifty-two pieces, only to discover that he had fifty-two wives.

When Montague reached Madras in the middle of December on his tour of India, Mrs. Besant had dire, but mistaken, premonitions of what her fellow-citizens would do because of their bitterness over the way the local government had unsuccessfully tried to reject the applications of several long-established organisations for hearings and to accept those of several "upstarts" instead. This time she was on two deputations approved by the government that of the *Madras Congress Committee* and that of the Women's Indian Association, which she had helped to found, and which presented Montague with a

memorandum stating that Indian women should be made eligible for the franchise on the same terms as Indian men. Her continued friendship with Montague and her eventual support of his recommendations for the future stemmed from these meetings with him in Delhi and Madras. As she wrote to Esther Bright, while waiting a summons to confer with him in Madras: "Montague will, I think, do well, but he has an uphill task against the reactionary Governments here."

These Montague discussions were, however, only a curtain-raiser to Annie Besant's grand entrance on the broadest political stage she had yet occupied, her Presidency over the *National Congress* in Calcutta. *New India* proudly recorded the lavish preparations being made for the largest such convention in Indian history. A great pandal to accommodate some nine thousand delegates and spectators was constructed of timber in the shape of an ellipse, like a *Roman amphitheater*. The delegates began to arrive several days ahead of the opening date, but the whole city breathlessly awaited the arrival of their heroine. Annie herself sent back despatches about her reception on 24 December, which was a warm one despite a bitingly cold day. Though her train was four hours late, a mammoth triumphal procession was ready for her. Almost every Indian sect, creed, and profession was represented in it. The volunteers wore brilliant sashes and headgear of green, yellow, orange, and crimson. To her it seemed like "one huge sea of heads," as she looked out of her carriage, watched the riders on "well-drilled chargers," and listened to the band playing. Red and green flags fluttered everywhere, backed by Union jacks and flags of other nations. The well-to-do carried gorgeous embroidered umbrellas. Flowers rained down on her from the crowded balconies, coloured silks hung from the windows, and as

her carriage passed under the arches and festoons of flowers and flags, the words of "*Vande Mataram*," "rent the sunlit air," ceasing only when she reached her headquarters in a great wealthy home.

On the great opening day, 26 December, the enthusiasm had been immense. All 4690 delegates and almost the same number of ordinary citizens who had been lucky enough to get in, leaving thousands outside, rose to their feet when she entered, again shouting "*Vande Mataram*!" Tilak, she admitted, also got an ovation. Four hundred progressive Indian ladies were present, and a chorus of Bengali girls sang national songs. The beloved Tagore had composed an ode, "*India's Prayer*," and read it himself. *Lord Ronaldshay*, the Governor of Bengal, one of the more sympathetic of the British administrators, had, however, refused to attend in order to preserve "rigid neutrality." Wadia, Kharpadi, and Mrs. Naidu addressed the overflow crowd of six thousand in a nearby square.

The moment for which *Annie Besant* had been waiting so eagerly for so long came at last. She grasped the pages of her manuscript address, "*The Case for India*," and moved to the rostrum. On the previous day, Christmas, she had delivered a long speech to the Theosophical convention on the war, the coming problems of peace, education, labour, the advent of the World Teacher, the Theosophical Educational Trust, and the programme of the *Theosophical Society* in general. This speech, however, had been more or less a routine effort. For weeks she had been devoting every available minute to preparing her Congress address, in which she intended to chart the future of India. Day after day she had shut herself up in her room in Madras, surrounded with the books, newspapers, and pamphlets she had borrowed from every library in the city, public and private. It was to be her supreme effort.

She spoke for one hour and fifty minutes. The crowd listened to her with respect, but it was not enthralled, as was customary at a Besant speech. After all, she was an old woman, exhausted from her recent experiences. As she saw her audience moving restlessly, she dropped out several sections of her address, which had been already released to the Press in its complete form. But there was one controversial section which, despite the advice of most of her close friends, she did not drop out.

Comment on the speech ranged from the faithful Arundale's "beautiful" and "masterly" to the long and sour editorial in the *London Times*, which expressed amazement that the Congress could elect as its spokeswoman "an elderly English lady" who paradoxically, in a "prolix address," declared the necessity of Home Rule for India. From the whole episode, which to *The Times* certainly did not inspire confidence, the editor concluded that the Indians obviously had no suitable candidate of their own for leader. *New India* of course indignantly denied this charge, and the Commonweal purblindly boasted that the split which had been predicted in Congress had not materialised. This latter assurance, however, was a slight case of whistling in the dark.

The passage which Annie had not omitted from her address had announced that she had adopted a new conception of the responsibilities of the office of President of the *Indian National Congress*. Previous incumbents had regarded it as essentially a one day or at the most a one-week job; it was an honorary appointment for past services, which at the same time afforded a limited sounding-board for views and plans for the future. Annie Besant proclaimed her conviction that the President of the National Congress should hold active office until a successor took over at the next annual meeting, and warned the organisation members



that she would expect their vigorous support in the campaign that she intended to make in the coming months for *Home Rule*. It was a dynamic conception of her office that would seem to be at least theoretically irreproachable, but in the current situation it was explosive.

Her closest advisers had realised the potential danger of her proposal, and had discussed it heatedly in advance. Ramaswami Aiyar, Wadia, Mookerji, and other friends had strongly advised her to take this passage out, because they were sure it would scare and alienate many Indian leaders, who would be afraid she would become too powerful and try to dictate to them. Her strong-mindedness was notorious, and was resented by many who had not been informed that she was acting in accordance with the orders of the *Rishi Agastya*. George Arundale was the only one of her advisers to support her. She stuck to her aggressive intentions, and within twenty-four hours most of the older, stronger, and more conservative Indian leaders had turned against her.

The conference, nevertheless, proceeded through its agenda, and preserved a surface unity. But also present was an almost unnoticed figure. Mohandas K. Gandhi stayed carefully in the background and took little part in the proceedings. Two days, however, after Annie Besant had delivered her disconcerting address to the most important public body in all India, Gandhi gave his inaugural address as President of a small new organisation, the All-India Social Service Conference.

### **The Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society**

Extract from a letter addressed to H.M.'s Ambassador at Washington, dated probably early in October, 1917.

"My attention having been called to a Canadian Press Despatch, also to an Associated Press Despatch reporting

that in the House of Commons, July 11th you had stated that:—

“The Madras Government had offered to relax its prohibition of Mrs. Annie Besant, head of the *Theosophical Society* so far as it affected her Theosophical and religious activities, but that Mrs. Besant declined the concession on the ground that it was impossible to separate her Theosophical and political work.”

“I beg to call your attention to the fact, first that Mrs. Annie Besant was voted out of the Theosophical Society in 1895 at its Convention in Boston, U.S.A., by a majority vote of ninety-three per cent, of the members in the U.S.A., and that similar action was taken in other countries with the result that the great majority of active membership throughout the world repudiated Mrs. Besant as being in any way whatever connected with the original Theosophical Society. The so-called Society of which Mrs. Besant is President, with headquarters in India, is therefore a Society which has no proper right nor title to the name.

“I beg also to call to the attention of yourself and through you of the British and Indian Government, the further fact that Mrs. Besant’s so-called Theosophical activities and teaching in the opinion of many of the members of the original Theosophical Society, in themselves constitute a grave menace to the welfare of the public at large, wherever such activities are carried on or teachings promulgated, and for the following among many other reasons which might be given, *viz.*, that Mrs. Besant over her own signature had declared that she considers that the Theosophical Society (of course that means the so-called *Theosophical Society* of which she is President) has no moral code binding on its members. In order that you may know the full context of this extraordinary statement, I beg to call to your attention an extract from one of her articles first

published in her magazine in India, and afterwards republished in pamphlet form which I have quoted in the accompanying pamphlet, page 8.

"I respectfully submit that any Society the Chief officer of which puts forward such views is a menace to the moral welfare of the community among whom such teachings may be promulgated. Because of this, and certain other teachings which are put forward by Mrs. Besant (and also by a certain C.W. Leadbeater—now resident in Sydney, N.S.W.,—who confessed in the courts of Madras to having given immoral teachings to boys, and who was characterized by Mr. Justice Bakewell in the Madras Court as holding opinions "which are certainly immoral and such as to unfit him to be a tutor for boys, and render him a highly dangerous associate for children," which teachings find no warrant whatever in Theosophy, but are absolutely contrary? Thereto, the members of the original *Theosophical Society* feel themselves still further justified in repudiating—unpleasant as the duty is—Mrs. Besant's having any connection or association with that Society, or her competency to speak or write upon the subject of Theosophy.

"In particular I desire to call to your attention the fact that from its inception by *Helena P. Blavatsky* in New York in 1876, the Theosophical Society has been not only unsectarian, but non-political. On some few occasions there have however been attempts to use the Society for political ends, but all such attempts have been promptly met and suppressed by its chief officers supported by an overwhelming majority of its members. One of the reasons why Mrs. Besant was voted out of the Society in 1895, was because of her seeking to use the Society to advance her own ambitions—employing political tactics to that end."

Another and more serious attempt was made by Ernest

Temple Hargrove, formerly of London, now of New York, to use the influence of the Society for the furthering of political ends. This coming to Mr. Tingle's attention, she took such action that removed him from the ranks of the Society. He then, as Mrs. Besant had done before, on ceasing to be a member of the original Theosophical Society, associated himself with some few others who had also ceased to be members, and formed a so-called Theosophical Society, under the title of "The Theosophical Society in America," in New York City, which Society has no connection with the original Theosophical Society, and is not endorsed by it, though from information in our hands some of the people belonging to it are of excellent reputation. Two years later, while still a member of the so-called "Theosophical Society in America" Mr. Hargrove's political activities in connection, with the Boer War were brought to the attention of the British Government. See Blue Book, July, 1900, "Affairs in South Africa" pp. 126-132, 150, 182-190.

As for the position taken by Mrs. Blavatsky regarding politics and the non-relation of the *Theosophical Society* to politics, this is most clearly expressed by H.P. Blavatsky in one of her best known works, "The Key to Theosophy," Section 12, in which she declares emphatically in response to the question "The Theosophical Society is not, then, a political organization?" Certainly not. It is international in the highest sense, in that its members comprising men and women of all races, creeds and forms of thought, who work together for one object—the improvement of humanity; but as a society it takes absolutely no part in any national or party politics."

In the constitution of the Theosophical Society (which, since its reorganization in 1898, and its merging with the wider organization Universal Brotherhood, it now known

as The Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society) and in all descriptions of its activities issued officially, the statement is always made that it is unsectarian and non-political.

In view of the fact that Theosophy and the Theosophical Society have been brought to the attention of the British and Indian Government through Mrs. Besant's political activities, it is but just that the above stated facts should also be brought to their attention in order that it may be clearly and positively understood that Mrs. Besant is not an accredited representative, nor even a member of the original Theosophical Society, and that her political activities, as also many of her so-called Theosophical activities and teachings are not approved nor endorsed by Mme. Katherine Tingley, the present Leader and Official Head of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society holding such position as successor of Mme. H.P. Blavatsky, and Mr. William Q. Judge, nor by the members of such Society. But on the other hand such activities and teachings referred to are absolutely contrary to the principles and teachings of true Theosophy. The teachings and practical work of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society are along unsectarian, non-political, humanitarian, ethical and spiritual lines, and any member of the Society departing from the unsectarian and non-political attitude of the Society would de facto cease to be a member, and his or her name would be stricken from the records of the Society.

Respectfully yours,

**Joseph H. Fussell, Secretary**

There is a further point that it may be important for His Majesty's Government to have information about in

connection with Mrs. Besant's Society, which may give a clue to the real reason of Mr. Wedgwood's visit to the country. For your information on this point I am sending to you a pamphlet entitled "Incidents in the history of the Theosophical Movement," and call your attention to pages 12-16, where reference is made to the formation by Mme. Blavatsky of an inner private body, at that time called the Esoteric Section, of which Mrs. Besant was a pledged member. The sole object of this body under Mme. Blavatsky, and later under her successor, William Q. Judge, and under the present Leader of the Theosophical Movement, late Katherine Tingley, was originally, and has always been solely to give instruction in the teachings of Theosophy, and along spiritual and moral lines. Never at any times has this inner body had to do with any political or sectarian activities, but it was expressly stated by Mme. Blavatsky in one of her principal works "The Key to Theosophy" that the Theosophical Society could take no part in politics, or along any sectarian lines.

After Mrs. Besant ceased to be a member of the original Theosophical Society, being voted out of the Society at its annual convention in Boston in 1895, by a majority vote of over ninety-three per cent, of the members in the United States, and which action was concurred in by a majority of the active members throughout the rest of the world, she started a society of her own, and also formed an esoteric body.

In the esoteric section as originally founded by Mme. Blavatsky in 1888, a pledge was required of the members which had purely to do with their theosophical duties, and their relations to the Society, and in no way whatever with their personal responsibilities or live outside of their relations to the Society. Such a pledge was in reality a pledge to oneself, and not to Mme. Blavatsky, or to any individual. I

am informed, however, on very good authority, that Mrs. Besant in the esoteric society which she has formed, and of which she is the head, has required a personal pledge of obedience to herself, and further, they have sent out some two or three years ago, with her sanction and by her authority, a statement made by Mr. Arundale, who was one of those recently interned with Mrs. Besant by the Indian Government, as follows : "We know that she will become one of the greatest rulers of the world, ruler of Gods and men." The whole thing is very ridiculous, if not insane, but it may be a clue to some of the excesses of these people.

For your information the above referred to esoteric section was discontinued by Madam, Katherine Tingley, the present Leader and Teacher in the *Theosophical Movement*, in 1898, when another body took its place, which is called The Class in Theosophy, and which has to do solely with the teachings of Theosophy, and with spiritual and moral guidance. I know from direct information that Mrs. Besant's esoteric section is very active in this country, in fact, someone who visited their headquarters at Krotona, thinking to have an opportunity to study Theosophy, but not caring to pledge himself until he knew something more about the people who were there, came away disgusted, because the greater part of the time was taken up with "*Esoteric meetings*," and I am further informed that the policy of the Society is practically decided upon at such esoteric meetings, and that the members are practically bound by oath to support any instructions that may come to them from Mrs. Besant, or the officers of the society. Over the present question of The Old Catholic Church I am informed that there is likely to be a split among Mrs. Besant's followers, and that this may culminate at their convention in New York. There was a statement to this effect published recently in the Los Angeles Times.

The enclosed clipping from the Rochester, N.Y. Chronicle will show the action taken by Mrs. Besant's followers in Rochester, N.Y. in connection with her internment, and I have no doubt that similar action was taken by her followers in other parts of the country. If positive evidence were desired regarding Mrs. Besant's instructions to her members with respect to politics, and particularly to the *Home Rule* agitation in India it would I think be necessary to obtain admission to her Esoteric Section (I write as above stated in the strictest confidence).

The position of the true theosophist is very different from that held by Mrs. Besant. Mme. Blavatsky, the foundress of the society, over her own signature, declared that she considered that the rule of the British Government in India had on the whole been a blessing for that country. Theosophy and true Theosophists have ever been upholders of law and order, and there is nothing in "Theosophy that could be construed as encouraging revolution." It has been very largely away from people of revolutionary tendencies, as was stated in my letter of July 31st, addressed to Mr. Austen Chamberlain, a copy of which I sent to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington, that the bitterest attacks have been made against Mme. Katherine Tingley, for the reason that she would not permit them to pursue activities along such lines with members of the Society. It was largely in order to prevent such activities, and to place in the hands of the chief officer of the organisation the power to prevent such activities, that the Society was reorganized by her in 1898, when by such action Mr. S.T. Hargrove, and a few others of like tendency, were removed from its ranks. Most of the calumnious and malicious statements which from time to time have been uttered and published against Mme. Tingley have accused her of the very things which she most of all, and the members generally of the organization, have



most strongly repudiated.

I am not writing from any prejudiced standpoint, but solely on the basis of fact, and as a matter of simple justice. I am an Englishman by birth, I came to the United States in 1890, and am now a citizen of the United States since 1904. There are a number of Englishmen resident here at our International Headquarters, and not one of them, and no member of the Society to my knowledge, would endorse or in any way sympathize with Mrs. Besant's political agitation or her attitude towards the British Government.

One of my objects in offering to His Majesty's Ambassador such information as I have stated above is first, because I believe such information should be in his possession, and secondly, in order that there may be no misunderstanding regarding Mrs. Besant's relation to the Theosophical Society, and to make it clear that there is no warrant in Theosophy for any political or sectarian agitation, and that the original Theosophical Society, now known as the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, which is under the direction of Mme. Katherine Tingley, with International Headquarters at Point Lain, California, does not encourage, sanction or endorse any political agitation, or any attempt to revolution.

In order to make clear to the public the unsectarian and non-political character of theosophy and the true Theosophical Society, and with special reference to Mrs. Besant's political agitation, and also her advocating the support of The Old Catholic Church, Mme. Tingley asked me to write an article for our *Theosophical Path*. This article will appear in October, when I shall then take pleasure in sending you a copy of the magazine. The article will also be printed separately, in order to give it a wider distribution, and I am enclosing a copy of this reprint.

Theosophy : Unsectarian and Non-Political? A note

on the conduct of Mrs. Annie Besant published in the *Theosophical Path* of October, 1917 and submitted by Babu Nibaran Chandra Gupta, President, Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, Ranchi.

The most direct meaning of the word Theosophy is 'Divine Wisdom' as was explained by Mme. Blavatsky when she first (in our present day) proclaimed its teachings. It is a term which connotes the 'Wisdom Religion,' the 'Secret Doctrine,' the primeval truth which was one in antiquity and which was the basis of all the great Religious Faiths of the World. Just as the one white light passing through a prism is divided into the seven prismatic colored rays, so the one while Light of Truth passing through the prism of the racial mind becomes divided into different religious faiths. And just as no one of the prismatic rays is or can be regarded as the one white light, or contains the white light in its fullness, but only an aspect of it; so no one of the Religious Faiths of the world contains or can be regarded as the whole Truth, though it may contain or present an aspect of the Truth.

For this reason Mme. Blavatsky, from the very foundation of the *Theosophical Society* urged upon the members to study comparative religion, to study the great faiths of the world to seek out those foundation truths which were common to all and so find again the ancient Wisdom-Religion—Theosophy.

Nowhere, however, and at no time, did she urge the support of any one religious faith or system, seeing that all the religious faiths of the world have become entrusted with theological dogmas and are hedged about with creeds. She makes the following important declaration :

"It is perhaps necessary, first of all, to say that the assertion that "Theosophy is not a Religion" by no means excludes the fact that Theosophy is religion itself. A Religion

in the true and only correct sense, is unite men together—not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. How Religion, *per se*, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only all MEN, but also all BEINGS and all things in the entire Universe into one grand whole. This is our theosophical definition of religion.”

“Thus Theosophy is not a Religion, we say, but Religion itself, the one bond of unity, which is so universal and all-embracing that no man, as to speak from gods and mortals down to animals, the blade of grass and atom can be outside of its light. Therefore, any organization or body of that name must necessarily be a Universal Brotherhood.” Accepting this definition of Theosophy as Religion itself, and not a religion, it must be clear that neither the Theosophical Society nor any official of the Society has any right to advocate or support any sectarian creed or dogma, or any one religious system, Faith or Church. And to the extent that any one professes to follow Theosophy, if he be sincere in his profession, that is, to the extent that he is a Theosophist, in place of advocating any sectarian creed or dogma, or any one religious system, Faith or Church, in the sense of a “particular set of dogmas and beliefs,” to the exclusion of or in opposition to other dogmas and beliefs, he will seek behind all these, for the kernel of Truth which is common to all religions, and for those truths which are to be found in degree in all. He will hold less and less to the outer forms, creeds, and dogmas which divide, and more and more to those teachings which have been universally proved to “be true, and which unite.” To take any other course would be to go contrary to this universal and basic principle of Theosophy.

It is true that in Theosophical Society are men and women holding different religious views, *Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Parsis, etc.*, and to all such it says : Seek

to get at the foundation of the religious faith you profess, and you will find a common meeting ground with others of different faiths. In an open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury (1837) adam. Blavatsky said the following:

"Theosophists know that the deeper one penetrates into the meaning of the dogmas and ceremonies of all religions, the greater becomes their apparent underlying similarity, until finally a perception of their fundamental unity is reached. This common ground is no other than Theosophy—the *Secret Doctrine* of the antiquity which, diluted and disguised to suit the capacity of the multitude, and the requirements of the time, has formed the living kernel of all religions."

The same writer (Madam Blavatsky) also says the following: "There is but one eternal Truth, universal, infinite and changeless spirit of Love, Truth and Wisdom, impersonal, therefore bearing a different name in every nation; one light for all, in which the whole Humanity lives and moves, and has its being. Like the spectrum in optics giving multicoloured various rays, which are yet caused by one and the same sun, so theologised and sacred systems are many. But the universal religion can only be one if we accept the real primitive meaning of the root of the word. We Theosophists so accept it; and therefore say we are all brothers—by the laws of nature, of birth, of death, as also by the laws of our utter helplessness from birth to death in this world, of sorrow and deceptive illusion. Let us then love, help and mutually defend each other against the spirit of deception; and while holding to that each of us accepts as his ideal of truth and unity—i.e. to the religion which suits each of us best—let us unite to form a practical nucleus of a *Universal Brotherhood* of Humanity without distinction of race, creed or colour.

In entire harmony with this is the following

declaration in the Constitution of the Universal Brotherhood and *Theosophical Society*:

Every member has the right to believe or disbelieve in any religious system or philosophy, each being required to show that tolerance for the opinion of others which he expects for his own."

This declaration, however, does not concede or give the right to any member to proselytize for any church or religious system or to advocate the support of any church or creed—thereby tacitly, if not openly, condemning all other churches and creeds for this would be a violation of the principles of Theosophy and tend to create dissension.

"Having found the inner meaning, having reached the common ground of all religions" which is "no other than Theosophy," having found the spirit which giveth life, no one, no Theosophist, if he is faithful to himself, to the Higher Self within, can ever again go back to the letter which killeth, or the dogmas which separate. Having found "the living kernel of all religions" the bond of union between Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, and men of all professions of faith, he will henceforth be a devotee of Truth alone. He can no longer call himself Christian or Buddhist, or by the name of any other separated religious faith.

He will not and cannot subordinate Truth to a partial expression of truth. It will henceforth be Truth and Light he will ever seek and follow: "it will be Truth and Light he will teach and advocate. He will not advocate the support of any church or any creed, but only Truth, Divine wisdom Theosophy."

Religion, considered fundamentally, unites religions, churches, creeds, sectarians. Looking back through all known history, what is the record of the wars, hatreds and strife between nations and individuals, have not the bitterest of these and of all human dissensions been due to

differences in religion, differences in creed and dogma, sectarianism?

The principal purpose and aim of the Theosophical Society since its foundation by H.P. Blavatsky in New York in 1875, and still more strongly insisted upon since its recognition by Katherine Tingley, in 1898, as the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, has been and is to accentuate the fundamental principle of Theosophy, *viz.* Universal Brotherhood. Harmony based on those foundation truths which are the very essence of Theosophy; the basic truths common to all religions; to seek for the common ground; not to accentuate any creed, any dogma, not to support any Church or any religion, even the greatest, but to support Religion, Truth—these alone can make men free. "There is no Religion higher than Truth," is its motto.

To come now to the application of the foregoing, and the reasons for making this statement, the following has been brought to our attention. It is a statement published in the official organ in the U.S.A. of a society which claims to be "Theosophical," the same being a section of a society of which Mrs. Annie Besant, a professed "Theosophist," is President. The statement in question which quotes authoritatively from Mrs. Besant, is as follows :

"Our President has not left us in doubts as to the activities to which we should devote our every available energy in the immediate future; we have not been left groping to find those excellent things for ourselves. In the Watch-tower for November, 1916 she has with directness and force informed us that it is a matter of very great importance that we shall do what we can:

(1) to strengthen the work of Co-Masonry; (2) to help in the establishment of that intellectually inclined, old but yet very small Church, known as the Old Catholic Church, among Theosophists; and (3) to aid in giving out the

educational ideas for the future race. She has made it as clear as daylight that we are to take the light of theosophy into the outer world entering the four great departments of life which so much need the illumination of our teaching at this critical time; these are politics, religion, education, and social reform."

The language is unequivocal; Mrs. Besant has "with directness and force informed us" (the members of the so-called Theosophical Society of which she is president "that it is a matter of very great importance that we shall do what we can."

"(2) to help in the establishment of ..... the Old Catholic Church. That is that these people who call themselves Theosophists shall do what they can to help in the establishment of a sect; that they shall desert, if indeed they ever held to it, unsectarianism and become sectarian. The clearer evidence, surely, is needed to demonstrate the fact that Mrs. Besant by advocating such action, and those who, acting on her instructions, take such action, are not Theosophists and have no right nor title to the name Theosophist."

This statement is not in any sense a criticism of the Old Catholic Church or its teachings, nor would that church be named here had it not been named by Mrs. Besant. The *Theosophical Society* attacks no church, no man's religion; but neither does it advocate any religion but seeks only for the Truth underlying all.

Against this misuse of the name "Theosophist" and against the misinterpretation and travesty of Theosophy which such action taken in the name of Theosophy implies, every true Theosophist protests.

For the sake of those of the public who may have been misinformed or do not know the facts, it should be stated that neither Mrs. Besant, nor any of her followers, nor,

again, any of members of the so-called Theosophical Society of which she is president, is a Member of, or affiliated with, the original Theosophical Society founded by H.P. Blavatsky which is now known as the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, of which Katherine Tingley is the Leader and Official head, with International Headquarters at Point Laina, California.

But there is till another reason for making this present statement and for emphasizing the fact that neither Mrs. Besant nor any of her followers is a member of, or associated with, or endorsed by the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, which reason is to be found in Mrs. Besant's advocacy of 'Co-Masonry' and her urging her followers to actively participate in politics.

In regard to politics the same general argument applies as in regard to religious dogmas, church creeds, etc. as given above. For the sake of the public, however, it should be said that as the Theosophical Society is unsectarian and does not therefore give support to any Church, sect, or creed; so also is it non-political and cannot therefore support any political party or movement, or take part as a Society or through its member in politics. For, as Churches, sects, and creeds divide and provoke dissension and stir up stripe; and are thus incompatible with the basic teaching of Theosophy, *viz*: Universal Brotherhood. The position of *Theosophical Society* in regard to politics is clearly stated by H.P. Blavatsky in her work. *The Key to Theosophy*, in these words:

"Do you take any part in politics? As a Society we carefully avoid them, for the reasons given, below. To seek to achieve political reforms before we have effected a reform in human nature is like putting new wine into old bottles. Make men feel and recognize in their innermost hearts what is their real, true duty to all men, and every old cause of



power, every iniquitous law in the national policy based on human, social or political selfishness, will disappear of itself. Foolish is the gardener who tries to weed his flower-bed of poisonous plants by cutting them out from the surface of the soil instead of tearing them out by the roots. No lasting political reform can be ever achieved with the same selfish men at the head of affairs as of old.

"The Theosophical Society is not, then, a political organization?

Certainly not. It is international in the highest sense, in that its members comprise men and women of all races, creeds and forms of thought, who work together for one object the improvement of humanity; but as a society it takes absolutely no part in any national or party politics.

Why is this?

For the very reasons I have mentioned. Moreover political action must necessarily vary with the circumstances of the time and with the idiosyncrasies of individuals. While, from the very nature of their position as Theosophists, the members of the *Theosophical Society* are agreed on the principles of Theosophy, or they would not belong to the Society at all, it does not thereby follow that they agree on every other subject. As a society they can only act together in matters which are common to all—that is, in Theosophy itself, as individuals, each is left perfectly free to follow out his or her particular line of political thought and action, so long as this does not conflict with Theosophical principles or hurt the Theosophical Society. "

The logic of this position is so clear that it is difficult to understand the state of mind of one, professing to be a Theosophist, who knowingly departs from it, in such case one can only conclude that there has been no real understanding of Theosophy.

Wide publicity has recently been given in the daily

Press to the recent action of the British Government in India in placing restrictions upon Mrs. Annie Besant, on account of her political activities. An Associated Press Dispatch, also widely published, reports that in the House of Commons, July 11th, the following statement was made by Mr. Austin Chamberlain, Secretary for India. The Madras Government had offered to relax its prohibition on Mrs. Annie Besant, head of the Theosophical Society, so far as it affected her Theosophical and religious activities, but that Mrs. Besant declined the concession on the ground that it was impossible to separate her Theosophical and political work — Compare Mrs. Besant's statement with that made by Madam Blavatsky which we again quote :

"To seek to achieve political reforms before we have effected a reform in human nature is like putting new wine into old bottles. Make men feel and hear to recognize in their innermost what is their real, true duty to all men, and every old abuse of power, every iniquitous law in the national policy based on human, social, or political selfishness, will disappear of itself." This is the crux of the whole matter: The work of Theosophy.

When just about to go to Press, information was received through the publication of an Associated Press Dispatch dated Bombay, India, Sept., 17th and Mrs. Besant and two of her associates have been released from internment by the Madras Government. They had "been held for political agitation." The Press Dispatch further states as follows: "It was recently announced that the Indian Government was prepared to recommend to the Madras Government that the restrictions placed on these people be removed if the Government were satisfied that they would refrain from unconstitutional and violent methods and political agitations for the remainder of the war and of all true Theosophists is basic. Any attempt to mix politics with

Theosophy, or to use Theosophy or the *Theosophical Society* to further political ends or in support of any political movement, would be to desert this basic position; seeing that such action and such support would necessarily accentuate the differences and antagonisms between men and parties instead of fostering the basic principles of Universal Brotherhood by which men can unite to act in harmony by the good of all. Just as the accentuation of religious dogmas and creeds is a cause of separation, antagonism, and dissension, so too the accentuation of political opinions and the support of one political party as against another, are likewise fruitful sources of separation, dissention, and antagonism. Hence no Theosophist, if he is seeking truly to fashion his life on the principles of Theosophy, and certainly no Theosophical Teacher will attempt to mix politics with Theosophy, for this would be a direct violation of the principles of Theosophy, and could not be regarded otherwise than as showing an utter disregard for those principles and the main object and purpose of the Theosophical Society, and as a failure to apply those principles in the affairs of daily life.

The only alternative conclusion, if the above be not held as applicable, is that Mrs. Besant has totally failed to understand the principles and teachings of Theosophy, and the first object of the Theosophical Society. It should be said that Mrs. Besant ceased to be a member of the original *Theosophical Society*, being removed from its ranks by a majority vote of ninety-three per cent of its members, as far back as the year 1890, and at no time since having been recognized by the members of that society as an exponent of Theosophy.

In conclusion the Original Theosophical Society, now known as The Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, ever has been and is fundamentally and irrevocably

unsectarian and non-political. And while Theosophists, "as individuals," as stated above by Mme Blavatsky, are "perfectly free to follow out his or her particular line of political thought and action," and as stated in the constitution to "believe or disbelieve in any religious system or philosophy," it must be distinctly understood, as she further says, that this is so only "so long as this does not conflict with Theosophical principles or hurt, the *Theosophical Society*," that is only so long as it does not provoke dissension and cause antagonism. Official sanction or advocacy of any political movement or party or activity, or of any church, religious dogma, or creed, would be a direct violation of the principles of Theosophy and of the first object of the Theosophical Society. Founded as it is upon Theosophy, and holding to the principles of Theosophy, the Theosophical Society cannot be otherwise than fundamentally and irrevocably unsectarian and non-political, so long as it is true to its declared objects and purposes. And the history and work of the original Theosophical Society, under the guidance of its three Teachers *Helena P. Blavatsky, William Judge, and Catherine Tingley*, have demonstrated that it has remained true to those teachings and principles. Furthermore, any society that deviates from those principles and teachings cannot be a Theosophical Society in the true meaning of that term; for Theosophy is more than a teaching or a mode of thought; it is life, true living, right action. It is Theosophy he will seek to make the rule and guide of his life, for as H.P. Blavatsky said, Theosophist is, who does Theosophy."

## 5

### HER ROLE FROM 1913 TO 1933

In the autumn of 1913 she started a series of eight lectures with the 'inciting' title 'Wake Up, India.' In them she demanded an end to the petty animosities within India, the reform of child-marriage and the caste system, better rights for Indian women, and a revival of the *panchayat*, the self-governing village council. To spread her message further she started a weekly journal called the *Commonweal*, subtitled 'A Journal of National Reform.' It followed with particular interest the progress of Gandhi and his 'passive resisters' in South Africa and noted that he had spoken there of the debt he owed to the Theosophical Society—it had turned him towards spiritual things at a time when he was young and sceptical. He and Annie Besant were not always to remain on such an amiable footing, however.

Of course, Annie received supernatural backing for her new ventures. Her astral voyage this time was not to Koot Hoomi but to India's special ruler, the Rishi Agastya, who dwelt invisibly with his king at Shamballah in the Gobi Desert. The message received was that she must "Press steadily the preparation for the coming changes and claim

India's place in the Empire. The End Will Be A Great Triumph. Do not let it be stained by excesses. Remember that you represent in the outer world in Regent, who is my Agent. My hand will be over you and My Peace with you.

When she was in London pursuing the ultimately successful fight for the guardianship of Krishna and Nitya she took the opportunity of writing to English newspapers, lecturing on India, and attending as many functions as she could to spread the word. During her stay she was able to show that she had not cut herself off from her socialist past. The Society was having labour problems with their new London headquarters; the building workers had gone on strike and had been locked out by their bosses. Annie asked that the workers and their union should negotiate directly with the Society and this was successfully done, to the great indignation of the middlemen.

She launched a second successful journalistic venture when she returned to India; She bought up a moribund Madras daily newspaper and reissued it as the New India, writing most of the editorials and many of the regular columns herself. All the other full-time staff members were Indian. The paper stood for self-government, an end to racial prejudice, and better living conditions for Indians. Within a few months it had doubled its circulation. Then in August 1914 the First World War broke out. New India immediately urged that the country should give all the aid it could to the Allies. Annie's personal explanation of the war was that Germany was under the control of the Black Powers. She by no means shelved her demand for self-government during the war. However, this made her highly unpopular in Britain but a heroine to the Indians.

Gandhi had returned to his native land by the beginning of 1916, after many years of struggle in South Africa, bringing with him the concept of passive resistance

that had guided his campaigns then. Annie admired him, but she doubted whether his method would make sense to the masses or bring him any political influence. Their disagreements were to grow fiercer with time. Nevertheless, in the *Commonweal* she described him as "one of the earth's really great men" and reminded readers that she had first met him in 1889 at Madam Blavatsky's.

Everytime she was continuing to work for and through the National Congress—speaking, writing a record of its history, and trying hard to reconcile the extreme wing with the moderates. Late in 1916 she set up the Home Rule League, attracting police attention and considerable hostility from the white Press. Once again Mrs. Annie Besant was becoming a serious annoyance to the Establishment.

She had her first clash with Gandhi early in 1916, at the grand opening ceremony of the Hindu University, which had grown out of the Central Hindu College she founded. When Gandhi stood up to make his speech he launched straight away into an attack on the jewelled Indian princes sitting behind him on the platform. They were indignant—some of them had sold jewels to help finance the university—and they staged a walkout. Annie was horrified, and accused Gandhi of provocation; the meeting broke up in confusion. To her further annoyance, the Indian papers took Gandhi's side. In her own two papers she tried to redress the balance.

Annie was now being hounded by the police despite her policy of relative moderation. Her mail was interfered with, her books were tabooed, and the *New India*, with several Indian newspapers, was threatened with closure under the *Press Act*. When an order for her externment from Bombay was passed (the grounds being that "Mrs. Annie Besant has acted and is about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety"), protests and petitions

poured in. The Congress meanwhile had adopted the doctrine of Home Rule as their own, and Annie's name began to be mentioned as a future President.

For some time that she was rumoured to be interned until the end of the war. In the summer of 1917 the Governor of Madras called her to a private interview and offered her a safe conduct to England, which she indignantly refused. "In that case," he said, "she would have to be interned, but he would not give any specific reason."

She arose and he walked with her to the door, and on his way he said, "I wish you to consider, Mrs. Besant, that we cannot discriminate and the whole of your activities will be stopped." I said, "You have all the power and I am helpless, and you must do what you like. There is just one thing I should like to say to Your Excellency, and that is that I believe you are striking the deadliest blow against the British Empire in India."

Annie Besant was never at a loss for a resounding final word. "What is my crime," she asked in the *New India*, "that after a long life of work for others, publicly and privately, I am to be dropped into the modern equivalent of the Middle Age *oubliette*—internment?" But the Governor was not to be swayed. A few days later, accompanied by two Theosophist colleagues, she left Madras for internment in Ootacamund, and was seen off at the station by huge crowds.

Some might have expected that a rest from her labours in the pleasant hill climate would have been quite welcome to Annie, at the age of nearly seventy. But this seems to have been the one time when she broke down completely. Work had been her drug, and now she was deprived of it. As the weeks of internment went by, she grew continually weaker and more depressed. Nothing could have been further from the quietism of the Eastern religions



incorporated into Theosophy than Annie's compulsively busy way of life; but now there was nowhere to go and nothing to do. Friends who visited her found her old and broken, eating little and sleeping little. All over the country, meetings of protest against the internment were being held, and photographs of the three prisoners sold for an anna a piece. "Who would have thought there would have been such a fuss about one old woman?" asked a disgruntled government official.

At last a group of anxious colleagues turned to Gandhi for help. His suggestion was a pilgrimage of volunteers across the thousand miles between Bombay and Annie's bungalow, to arouse public concern; but the idea was turned down as impractical. It was in fact her influential Theosophist friends in England who brought pressure to bear on the government; and after ninety-four days of internment, weak and ill, she was released. Indians everywhere overjoyed; the British in India were glum.

The chance of work to be done revived Annie in no time. She knew that her name was now being seriously brought forward as next President of the Congress; while she still interned a number of provincial committees had chosen her as their candidate. Her popularity was at its peak and when she stepped out at Madras station the crowds stretched along the whole route to Adyar. Straight away she set out on a lecture tour through northern India, where she found the audiences and the excitement she had missed so sorely during her seclusion.

She was at the peak of her popularity in India now, a national heroine. When Montague, who was the new Secretary of State for India, met her, he had a high regard for the lady. The meeting with Montague was just a prelude to the high point of all her work for India, her Presidency of its National Congress in December, 1917.

It was the largest Congress ever yet held where a great amphitheatre to seat some 9,000 people was specially erected; the procession that lined up for Annie's arrival was the biggest yet. Banners and garlands were hung above the route, bands played, flower petals showered down on her. To her whole varied career this was the climax—or perhaps ironically short moment of triumph, as an anti climax.

Her speech at Congress was not quite the riveting success she was accustomed to, and *The Times* in London, always hostile to her, commented on the paradox of an elderly white lady being the one chosen to represent about to agree with *The Times*. From now on, as Gandhi's status rose, Annie Besant's started to decline. She had begun to fall between two stools—Indian nationalists found her outdated and too moderate, the English considered her wildly extreme. And she never quite reached the heart of the masses as Gandhi did; "her greatest popularity had been among educated Indians, so much influenced by Theosophy."

### **Views of Different Dignitaries about Mrs. Besant**

During the last three years Theosophy has been passing through troublous times.

The Hindu University movement, and the attempt of Mrs. Besant to introduce the worship of a new avatar or incarnation, have had a very great effect on Theosophy.

The new incarnation is a boy named Krishna Murti, the son, I believe, of a retired deputy collector in Madras. Mrs. Besant has tried to persuade the public that he is the re-incarnation of Jesus Christ and Buddha. A book said to have emanated from him is called *At the feet of the Matter*. In this Krishna Murti is called Alcyone. From the litigation proceedings, now, it seems probable that those who all

along have seen Mrs. Leadbeater's pen in *At the feet of the Matter are correct*.

The attempt of Mrs. Besant to bring forward this incarnation led to a split not only in the Theosophical Society but among the Trustees of the Central Hindu College.

Roughly speaking, the line of cleavage is between the European and the Hindu Theosophists, though some of the latter adhere still to Mrs. Besant.

Mrs. Besant's idea seems to have been to draw the great mass of the Hindus towards Theosophy by means of her re-incarnation of Buddha and to attract the Christians too. This, if successful, would have brought a great accession of strength to the Theosophical Society, and incidentally have brought Mrs. Besant into a pot power. Mrs. Besant however appears to have quite over-rated her powers of getting any considerable body of Hindus to join her, and the result of the whole thing promises to be a dismal failure, likely to lead to a serious split in the Theosophical Society and to other evil results.

It would be natural to expect that Mrs. Besant would make a graceful retreat from an impossible position, but possibly she dares not compromise her position with her European and American supporters for the chance of bringing her Indian supporters again to heel. At any rate she is said to have made no concession so far.

The announcement made last year that Mr. Arundale, the Principal of the Central Hindu College, would leave and take up work of a more definitely Theosophical nature, I think, was a veiled warning to the opposition that Mrs. Besant was prepared to withdraw her support if they were not prepared to meet her halfway.

The opposition have not met her halfway, and so apparently the Theosophists are seceding from the Central Hindu College: Mr. Arundale, the Principal of the college,

and Pandit Ikbāl Narain Gurtu, the head of the high school, will both leave at the close of the current session. Mr. Arundale goes home, and Pandit Ikbāl Narain Gurtu takes up the work of Secretary of the Theosophical Society.

If the new principal who will take Mr. Arundale's place objects to the enunciation of the theosophical beliefs, other members of the school and college staff are likely to secede.

Neither party has declared war openly—I think because to do so would be to close the door to a compromise, opportunities for which might possibly occur, and also because an open rupture would probably prejudice in the public eye the cause of the side which declared war, but there seems no doubt that a state of war does prevail.

The litigation in Madras in which Mrs. Besant figures is probably promoted by the Hindu party with a view to discredit Mrs. Besant with Hindus and thus bring her to surrender.

Mrs. Besant's counter move in this game of chess is to start a *Theosophical College*.

To understand this it is necessary to refer to the history of the non-official universities movement.

Mrs. Besant's scheme of a university of India was, in my opinion, much better and more comprehensive and universal than either of the Hindu or Muhammadan universities, but it had the fatal defect that it did not appeal to what may be styled competitive religious feelings, and so when once the Muhammadan university scheme was launched Mrs. Besant's scheme was bound to fail, and it was natural that Mēlaviyā's scheme took all the enthusiasm and the money. Mrs. Besant made a light for her scheme, but had to succumb.

This however was by no means a total defeat for Mrs. Besant, as, if the Central Hindu College remained a self-governing institution within the new university, she would

still have the same voice as hitherto in the Central Hindu College, together with some representation on the governing body of the university.

Here her mistake over the "Incarnation" becomes important. It led to a serious split in the governing body of the Central Hindu College, and this has given Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya a great opportunity. If the Theosophists can be detached from the Central Hindu College, then, owing to the greater portion of the honorary workers leaving and owing to the failure of income, which was largely dependent on Mrs. Besant's stirring oratory, the college will be reduced to great financial difficulties.

Unless they apply to Government for a grant-in-aid, which seems unlikely, they will have to give Pandit Madan Mohan a controlling interest on their board, and this seems to be the probable course of events.

I do not think that the tone of the institution would change.

Honorary workers are earnest men and women and acquire influence over boys. Probably the Hindu university will not be able to secure honorary workers, and if it does, it is not at all certain that the object of such men will not be political influence and I would much rather that things remained as they are. The relations of the Central Hindu College to Government and the tone of the institution appear to me to have most distinctly improved since the college was first started, and I doubt whether there will not be retrogression under the new control.

As to the proposed Theosophical College, I have heard different accounts and I imagine that the project has not yet taken definite shape.

Mr. Arundale told me some time ago that when the Hindu university was fairly started Mrs. Besant wanted to start in miniature her own pet scheme. The idea was to

have a Christian college, a Hindu college and, I think, a Musalman College. Theosophy was of course to be the link of union.

He said that a Christian minister (or broad and unbigoted views) had promised to take on the Christian college. He said that the scheme was still much in the air and no details had been settled.

One of the members of the Central Hindu College told me that the Theosophists of the Central Hindu College would probably secede and start a Theosophical college, which would be affiliated to the new university.

I think it is clear that the Theosophists, if Malaviya sticks to his guns, as doubtless he will, will start a Theosophical college of some sort and withdraw their support from the Central Hindu College. What the precise form of this institution will be it is quite impossible to foretell. One of the members of a CHC personal note as an outsider is:

I lived for a year (1909-10) at the Adyar, opposite the Theosophical Headquarters. I have met Mrs. Besant more than once and I heard a good deal then and since about the recent developments of Theosophy. The Alcyone cult had not then been originated but Krishnamurti and his brother Nityananda used to pass my bungalow every morning in company with Leadbeater and Clarke and Leadbeater's reputation was common theme of conversation—for his enemies in America used to bombard all the leading European officials in Tsadrab from the Governor downwards with pamphlets dealing with petite prejudices and scandals and other chapters on his past history. There was no evidence, however, at that time too.

Hindu adherents of Theosophy apprehended moral continence from association with Leadbeater, or regarded with other than feelings of veneration. As in the Oscar

Wilde case—it was not outraged public opinion which put the matter into the courts but a personal quarrel. Dr. Nanjunda Rao of Mylapore, an extremist and a political suspect, quarrelled with Mrs. Besant over her change of attitude towards Government, and her advice to students not to participate in political movements and this quarrel was fomented and encouraged by the most uncompromising enemy of the British Raj in Southern India—Mr. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Editor of the Hindu. Dr. Nanjunda Rao is believed to have financed Naryaniah, the outraged father in the recent successful suit for the recovery of his sons, just as the Pall Mall Gazette was believed in 1905 to be behind the Marquis of Queensberry. The Hindu has devoted columns to the record of evidence in that case and in the concocted criminal cases for defamation brought by Mrs. Besant and other residents at the Theosophical Headquarters in connection with an article.

In the Antiseptic—a Madras Medical Journal, in which the existence of a “Temple of Onaniam” in the environs of Madras was viewed with apprehension. All these criminal cases ended in discharge, and the article was filed by the Presidency Magistrate who tried them all to have been written by Dr. Hair—as a non-medicalman—solely in the public interest. Dr. Hair holds strong political views but is not an extremist like Dr. Nanjunda Rao or Mr. Kasturiranga Iyengar and his article was not I think a piece of the common design, though it served to focus attention on the undesirability of Leadbeater as a companion of youths, and enabled pressure to be brought to bear more readily upon Narayaniah to sue Mrs. Besant for the guardianship of his sons. The Alcyone cult was a great blunder on Mrs. Besant’s part and alienated many European Theosophists including several of those residents at Adyar, while, as has been too clearly shown in the Courts, it completely failed to act, as

was hoped, as a great proselytising force in respect of the Hindus. In the nineteenth century, even in India, an Incarnation who bicycles furiously—and has to go to England to be coached for the Matric at Oxford is suspect, and though “At the feet of the Master” has had a phenomenal sale, there are few, even at Adyar, who regard it as the unaided effort of Alcyone.

What will happen hereafter, depends to some extent upon the result of the strenuous efforts which Mrs. Besant is making to get Mr. Justice Bakewell’s decision in the civil case, and the Presidency Magistrate’s orders of discharge in the several criminal cases, reversed on appeal. If the guardianship of Krishnamurti is restored to her, the Order of the Star in the East which contains the inner circle of “Alcyone” worshipper—may continue its propaganda, though as long as the discredited Leadbeater is connected with it—it is not likely to make great headway. But if, as is much more probable she fails, I should not be surprised if she allows the cult to die a natural death, and transfer Leadbeater without ostentation from the Adyar to some Theosophical Asram on the Continent, or in Japan.

From one point of view the present position is regrettable, for those who have humiliated Mrs. Besant had a political rather than a moral axe to grind. They saw nothing to cavil at in the Decadents of Nasik or Eastern Bengal but Leadbeater who even if we believe the worst said of him is a sexual pervert far removed in degree from Dayanand or Pulin Behari Das, is held up to general obloquy simply because it suited the purpose of Dr. Nanjunda Rao so excellently well and the Editor of the Hindu have every reason to hope that any influence for good politically speaking, which Mrs. Annie Besant previously exercised over the student population of Madras and Benares has been irreparably lost.



(1) For some time the more moderate tone of the articles appearing in "New India" gave rise to the hope that the action taken by the Government of Madras in forfeiting the security deposited by Mrs. Besant and requiring a largely increased deposit was having the desired effect. It is now, however, apparent that the action was not sufficiently drastic. During the last few months Mrs. Besant has apparently been much encouraged in her political schemes by the adoption of her Home Rule proposal by the Congress and by the Moslem League, as also by the quashing of the order in the Tilak Security Case. She has also found that the Russian revolution provides a useful argument for the purpose of exciting Hi-feeling against the Government and recently she has written or allowed to be produced in "New India" articles which have become increasingly objectionable, virulent and inflammatory. These articles have in my opinion now reached such a stage that they can no longer be tolerated without danger to the public interest.

(2) Their pernicious influence is not confined to Madras, but permeates more or less the whole of India, exciting disaffection towards the Government and inciting the people to take Home Rule by force if it is not granted to them on the cessation of the war. The articles appearing in the paper breathe defiance not only against particular high officials including Sir Reginald Craddock. Lord Pentland and His Excellency the Viceroy, but systematically attack the local Governments, the Government of India and occasionally the Government of the United Kingdom and the time has now come when it is in my opinion desirable that the Government of India should address the local Government of Madras suggesting that immediate and severe measures should be taken to remove this danger.

(3) There is no lack of material on which to base such measures. The list of objectionable articles which have appeared lately in "New India" is a long one, but the extracts; in the file below are very fair samples of the character of the articles.

For ready reference I append to this note types extracts of statements which are of a particularly dangerous character.

Mrs. Besant's general attacks on the Government appear to be on the following lines:

- (i) Every country has a right to be free, Britain alone boasts of liberty and yet imposes an autocracy on another country. For this reason Mrs. Besant is ashamed that she is in part an Englishwoman.
- (ii) The Government of this country is an oppressive bureaucracy, which does not seek the good of India, but only the benefit of England and the English.  
The poverty of India is due to the Home charges, the extravagantly paid bureaucracy and the deliberate neglect of Indian interests for those of English trade.
- (iii) India was before the entry of the English a prosperous country, but now she had lost her prosperity and is treated as a conquered country without any respect for the rights of the people. Her manufactures have been destroyed by Lancashire, lack of food has been increased by the Railways, which facilitate the export of crops, and her peasantry are ruined by the English system of taxation.
- (iv) The Government is frequently guilty of illegality and dishonesty towards the people. This is the case for instance in regard to the Press Act and the Defence of India Act, the rules under which are

improperly used. Promises of political advancement made by Government are illusory and it is not intended to fulfil them.

- (v) The misery of men and the dishonour of women in Fiji and other places where the indentured labour system is in force is due to the Government of India and is in accordance with their endeavours and His Excellency the Viceroy is personally responsible for it.
- (vi) The officers of Government are constantly subjected to wicked and unfair attacks, imputations on their honesty, charge of oppressive conduct towards revolutionaries, the latter being painted as innocent persons unduly oppressed, and the Government itself is accused of unfair treatment of Indians.
- (vii) The Government policy in regard to education is represented as responsible for the condition of Indian boys. In ancient days everyone was able to read and write (an incorrect statement). It is said that boys not lack energy and the joy of youth, and that this is because they are frightened under the Government system. Their youthful enthusiasm being marked down as sedition. Similarly, it is stated that the Government of India have killed University education.
- (viii) While descanting on the miseries of India under British Rule, miseries which, according to Mrs. Besant, have increased since the country came under the direct control of the Crown Mrs. Besant constantly draws comparisons of a very ominous character between Russia and India. It is said for instance that statements made of Lord Pentland's speeches might have been spoken by the last of

the Romanos a few weeks ago, Sir Michael O'Dwyer's action in quelling disorder in the Punjab is said to have been as severe as the Russian system of crushing revolution. In an article of 5th May, 1917, Mrs. Besant hints that the peasantry of India must be taught what the peasantry of Russia have done and points out that a similar revolution took place in Japan and is now taking place in China. Those found guilty of murder and other revolutionary crimes in Bengal are likened to the Russian students and others who murdered the late Czar of Russia and blew up trains, and at the same time these Russian revolutionaries are held up to eulogy as saviours of Russia, the obvious intention being to urge Indian youths, already fired with the desire for the political advancement of India, to commit similar crimes. It is difficult to overestimate the danger of these suggestions at the present time.

- (ix) Mrs. Besant attacks the loan of a hundred million an unjustifiable in one article.

In another she says that it does not matter whether anyone subscribes or not, but she professes to be very keen as to the Indian Defence Force, not however, really with a view to its being of assistance to the Empire, but as a step towards the formation of a citizen army, in which there are to be definite companies of persons who have accepted Home Rule as their policy.

- (x) In more than one article it is suggested that it is the people of India alone who are to decide whether the country is to be ruled by Britain or to be free.

That it only remains for them to proclaim their

own liberty and that it is their duty, actively to push, in order to secure self-government. England has met her with the solid indifference and she must claim her rights.

- (xi) In some articles the British Empire is also the subject of attack, and it is alleged that she meets legitimate demands with indifference and coercion and has no regard for anything but her own trade, the public being told not to regard the British Empire as of importance, but only to consider India. I draw particular attention to the article entitled "A Great Betrayal." The insinuation is made that the War Conference has deliberately decided to sacrifice India for the profit of the rest of the Empire.
- (xii) In recent articles Mrs. Besant openly advocates passive and even active resistance to Government, and disobedience of Government orders.

5. The cumulative and general effect of the articles cannot but be to stir up disaffection against the Government, disaffection which is particularly undesirable during the present war, and I think that it is necessary in the public interest that we should now address the Government of Madras on this subject, pointing out the grave danger of allowing this lady to continue to spread disaffection in this manner without check. I think we might add that *prima facie* the articles referred to would appear to justify action against Mrs. Besant either under the Press Act or under the Defence of India Rules; but that the Government of India do not wish in any way to interfere with the discretion of the local Government in this matter although they consider that some effective measures should be taken to remedy the evil.

6. I may add that the Punjab Government has already

addressed the Government of Madras on the subject in the letter below which puts the position very clearly. It may be hoped that with the additional stimulus of a communication from the Government of India, the local Government of Madras will not hesitate to take drastic action.

7. Will Secretary please draft a letter to the Government of Madras which I will take to His Excellency on Monday after scrutiny by the Hon'ble Mr. Lowndes.

W.H. Vincent, 16-6-17

(I) *Extract from "New India," dated the 18th January, 1917.*

"If the 'reconstruction of the Europe' is not to drive India to despair, Home Rule must be granted as part of the reconstruction. Only as a free nation can she safely enter the Imperial Council. To enter it as a Dependency means to place her under the yoke of the colonies, to ensure her being drained for the benefit of the Empire in which she is not a citizen."

(II) *Extract from "New India" dated the 22nd January, 1917.*

"All the evidence shows that the masses were infinitely better off under the rule of their countrymen than they are now."

(III) *Extract from "New India," dated the 3rd February, 1917.*

"We stand upon Mr. Abdur Rahim's report and say that it is that which we want; and we should say in unmistakable words that India no longer wants your boons, your concessions and these offers that you make; India wants to be mistress in her own house. It is Home Rule that we want, and all this is an anachronism.

(IV) *Extract from "New India" dated the 19th February, 1917.*

**"Sir Reginald Craddock does not seem to be in the least ashamed of the statement he made, and following the example of other public officers, he takes the opportunity of slandering these unfortunate victims of a wicked system. They are members of a revolutionary conspiracy: if that be true they should be put on trial: if there is no evidence fit to be submitted to a court of law, what right has Sir Reginald Craddock to slander these men?"**

**(V) Extract from "New India," dated the 22nd February, 1917.**

**On the Defence of India Force.**

**"It shall not believe much in peers at the next meeting unless, at this first recruiting meeting held in India there are young men coming forward as the first step in recruiting for a true army of Indian—the citizen army—not the regular army in the ordinary sense of the term."**

**(VI) Extract from "New India," dated the 6th March, 1917.**

**"It would be difficult to conceive anything more ungracious than His Excellency the Viceroy's speech to the Press Deputation that waited on him yesterday. The Viceroy has displayed himself in most unattractive colours, and has placed himself in direct opposition to the opinion of the whole of educated India."**

**(VII) Extract from "New India," dated the 12th March, 1917.**

**"The Government officials in the mufassil are in many cases putting recruits off; they say they have no forma, etc. It is pretty plain that the Indian recruits are not wanted, and that when they are finally warded off, we shall have to hear the sneer: The Indians talk; they do not act."**

**(VIII) Extract from "New India," dated the 20th March, 1917.**

**Under the title, "The Defence Force."**

**"Men who give their blood for the Emperor are subjected to this disgusting and degrading punishment (i.e., flogging), and it is a disgrace that men who fight like heroes should be whipped like slaves."**

**(IX) Extract from "New India" dated the 16th April, 1917.**

**"Since the Viceroy's outrageous interference with a case which was *sub judice*, attacking the High Court Judges a few days before it came before them in a way which—were it not for the respect in which we hold them, we should think had swayed their judgment—His Excellency has said nothing worthy of note, though he has talked largely. "Without Home Rule our industries will perish under the fierce heel of mercantile England."**

**(X) Extract from "New India," dated the 26th April, 1917.**

**"That spirit (i.e., the spirit of energy, vigour and joy of youth) was not found in India because in schools boys were ruled by fear and not by love, because they were repressed and not encouraged, because youthful haste was blamed as fault and youthful enthusiasm was marked down, as criminal unrest and sedition."**

**(XI) Extract from "New India," dated the 1st May, 1917.**

**"Sir Michael O' Dyer is not a son of whom Ireland can be proud. It is true that the crushed out rebellion, as the Tsar crushed it in Russia, with the gallows and the Andaman, the latter a far more cruel punishment than that of exile to Siberia, save where the latter included working in the mines.**

**The poor little effort at rebellion which he killed out so harshly did not need so much judicial bloodshed, and though a Viceroy may praise, the Indians condemn. There is no mercy in high places since Lord Hardinge went away."**

**(XII) Extract from "New India," dated the 2nd May, 1917.  
Headline, "A Great Betrayal."**



**"That vote condemns India to remain a 'Plantation,' that which the East India Company made her, destroying her indigenous manufacturers to that end—the manufactures which had created her enormous wealth, the wealth which lured the Western nations to her shores.....The policy which reduced the Indian masses to poverty and brought about the rebellion of 1857.....consists of keeping India as a reservoir of raw materials.....The Imperial Conference now proposes to continue the process, but to deprive India of the small advantage she possessed of selling her raw materials in the open European market, and thus obtaining a price fixed by the need of the competing nations. She is to sell her cotton within the Empire at a price fixed to suit the colourless purchasers of England and the Dominions, fixed in a market controlled by them, fixed to give them the largest profit and to reduce hers to the lowest point.....She will be paid the lowest price which her necessities compel her to accept, and will become the wage-labourer, the wage-slave, of the Empire.....Such is the Great Betrayal of India by the Government of India nominees. But they have made one thing clear. Unless the coming of Home Rule be hastened, so that India is freed before the great battle of Imperial preference is fought out, India will be ruined. The Trio of Government delegates, in concert with the Secretary of State for India, have voted away all hope of India's industrial regeneration."**

**(XIII) Extract from "New India," dated the 8th May, 1917.**

**"The sun of liberty rose for the children of Nippon a few years ago; it has been rising for waking China; it is now rising for the Russians. Our hour is approaching. India too shall be free: but the sons of India must sacrifice as the sons of Japan did; they must undergo the change of heart**

that those who were slumbering in the Celestial Kingdom passed through; they must stand up for Right and Justice as the Russians did."

(XIV) *Extract from "New India," dated the 9th May, 1917.*

"Having found out that the spread of higher education meant the lessening of their power (the power of our rulers), systematic efforts have been made to tarnish the quality and minimise the genuineness of University education in this country."

(XV) *Extract from "New India," dated the 11th May, 1917.*

This article, entitled "General Order No. 59, refers to an order issued by the Government of Madras, prohibiting the attendance of students at certain political meetings."

"The whole youth of a nation cannot be permanently crushed. Russia tried to do it, with a ruthlessness and a thoroughness that can never be surpassed, and we see the result in a Revolution which is applauded by the civilised world."

(XVI) *Extract from "New India," dated the 15th May, 1917.*

"Every act of oppression makes in increasingly clear to Indian eyes that a policy of 'wait and see' must give place to policy of 'push and go.' Our rulers may seal our lips and restrain our bodies, but every tyranny over the body sets free and force from the heart."

(XVII) *Extract from "New India," dated the 19th May, 1917.*

With reference to the Imperial Conference it is stated:

"And through their nominee, and what is worse, in India's name, a foreign autocracy will barter away India's freedom, with the result that India will be compelled to

serve five masters instead of one."

(XVIII) *Extract from "New India," dated the 21st May, 1917.*

She (Mrs. Besant) never says "I am an Englishwoman," for she is thoroughly ashamed of belonging even partially to a race that boasts of its own liberty and inflicts an autocracy on others."

(XIX) *Extract from "New India" dated the 26th May, 1917.*

"The Tsars of Russia were forced to send the flower of their educated class to Siberia. But the Tsardom has fallen and the exiles are welcomed by crowds rejoicing in the freedom won by their sufferings. But the Executive flouts the High Courts, and even persists in a course branded as illegal."

(XX) *Extract from "New India," dated the 29th May, 1917.*

"In the ancient days, everyone was able to read and write and there were pial schools in every village." That was the great change they wished to bring about.

"No nation ought to be governed by foreigners," it was their right to be free.

"No one had a right to say that she (Mrs. Besant) had to be silenced, and she knew that Government could certainly crush an old woman, but her silence would speak more strongly than herself. Russia paid dearly for her successful revolution. The Russian Government began to arrest and interri them, shut them up in dark rooms, and those against whom there was no evidence were sent into exile. No country had won her freedom without some suffering."

(XXI) *Extract from "New India," dated the 4th June, 1917.*

"They (i.e., the Executive) want to crush her (i.e., Mrs.

Besant) for many reasons. It would check recruiting, and thus justify the Viceroy. It would prevent her from sending to England the full statement of her case against the Press security confiscation. True, the Press would clamour; but the Executive cares nothing for the "Press-True, there might be public meetings. After all, what can the people do?"

Well they need not buy any English goods? Bengal touched the pockets of the English traders, and that, undid the Partition. They can let the world know what is going on in India, and so force England to stop autocracy here. It is destroyed in Russia; it is tottering in Germany; only under England's flag it is rampant.

"When a hundred people of spotless character are in gaol as political prisoners the whole world will cry shame. But Executive Orders, depriving people of the normal freedom of civilised nations, have no moral authority behind them, and the good citizen may even find it his duty to resist them, as Hampden misted the payment of ship-money."

*(XXII) Extract from New India dated 25<sup>th</sup> May, 1911.*

"His Excellency !

"All thought of early grant of responsible self government should be put entirely out of mind. Such statement one would will imagine as having been uttered by last Roman only fe weeks ago."

The year after her Presidency of Congress Montague published his proposals for Indian refrom; Annie declared them outrageously inadequate, as did the Indians themselves. Later, however, she was to suggest that with modifications they might be acceptable, and she was not forgiven. Gandhi meanwhile was winning battles with his passive resistance policy, which Annie had always opposed, and her own Home Rule League rejected her as President

in favour of Gandhi. One of her Indian followers has written of how horrified he was when an audience of students heckled and insulted her, "All these forty years my white body has been an asset," she said to him. "It is no longer so, and the youth of India has become normal in its behaviour. My work has been crowned with success." Yet she would scarcely have been human if she had not also been hurt.

In April, 1919 the Jallianwala Bagh massacre put an end to the moderate influence in India and undo years of reformist work. At Amritsar in the Punjab, General Dyer, a strong but small-minded disciplinarian and a man who unquestioningly put military above human considerations, was sent in to prevent further trouble. Beginning on 10 April with the dispersal of an angry and violent crowd of about 30,000 by gunfire, with many casualties, the Amritsar massacre exploded on 13 April, a day of holiday-making to the Indians. Before it was over, Dyer and a detachment of fifty Gurkhas and Baluchis had shot down in cold blood some 2500 natives at the Jallianwala Bagh, a garden, with large walled enclosure near the Golden Temple. When their ammunition began to run low, he marched his men away, leaving close to five hundred dead and about two thousand wounded on the ground, whom he ordered to be left to die in the open. The ultimate brutality was that the British in India subscribed a fund of £30,000 for Dyer as a reward for his deed. Annie was entirely at one with the Indian public in her outraged reaction, but she could not resist reminding the public in her newspapers that she had predicted all along that Gandhian non-violence would lead to violence. After a summer spent in England preaching the Home Rule cause the first since the war broke out—she came back to India to find herself, her moderation and her white skin all discredited. India was to award her an

honorary doctorate in 1921, but it was no more than a gesture towards an old, discarded friend.

In the summer of 1920, first World Congress of Theosophists was held in Paris. At that time Annie was seventy-two and had forty-six years of public work behind her. After so many years, India seemed to have rejected her, and she was free to give first place to Theosophical affairs. Fourteen hundred delegates from thirty-nine countries attended the gathering; if she had been superseded at home in India, she still had a Theosophical kingdom to rule over. Unfortunately it was a kingdom racked by feuds, rivalries, accusations and counter-accusations. Leadbeater was the centre of all this like before but it was not long before he began to set up little kingdoms of his own there. Various youth organisations were set up for his young proteges—the Golden Chain. In the King's Service, the Order of the Round Table (in which he made himself Senior Knight-Founder Sir Lancelot). But these were not quite enough; with his usual unshakeable aplomb he now took over a small Christian sect that called itself the Old Catholic Church, renamed it the Liberal Catholic Church, and had himself and several other Theosophists ordained bishops. Although there was already a special Krishnamurti organization, the Order of the Star in the East, the new group fitted in well with the plans for Krishnamurti's emergence as World Teacher; the Indian Christ would have a Church to lead, complete with vestments' liturgy and hierarchy. From India Annie had endorsed the scheme: "It is likely to be the future church of Christendom when He comes," she wrote. Of course in a way he had come; Krishnamurti certainly existed, but he himself was considered only a Vehicle for the World Teacher to inhabit. Privately many Theosophists were wondering if they had backed the wrong horse. When Annie had made her first

post-war trip to see 'her' boys in England, the twenty-four-year-old Krishnamurti was still a bewildered young man whose only act of rebellion against his fate was to fail examinations.

The creation of the Liberal Catholic Church appalled many Theosophists in Australia and elsewhere; the American branches were especially hostile. In addition, Leadbeater's brother bishop Wedgwood and several other Liberal Catholic Church were being pursued by the police with the same charges of paedophilia against them that Leadbeater had always managed to fend off. With her misguided sense of loyalty Annie did not sack the lot of them, but publicly came to their support in her Theosophical journals. The world Congress of 1920 was a very divided house to rule over.

Young Krishnamurti was worried about tuberculosis in his beloved brother and heard of nothing but harmony and faith, badges and initiations and the astral plane, but in spite of all the brainwashing he had patiently undergone he was becoming more and more sceptical. Not surprisingly, the theme of his teachings in later life was the futility of authority, organizations and dogma. "Heavens, how I hate it all," he wrote from Australia to his Theosophical foster-mother, Lady Emily Lutyens:

"As I go about the street the people nudge each other and point me out; the other day one chap said to the other, "There goes that chap printed in the papers, the Messiah!" Then they burst out laughing. I should have laughed too if I hadn't been there or involved in anyway.... I shall have it all my life. Heavens, what have I done to deserve all this.

Nevertheless he was induced to stand up at a Theosophical gathering and declare Leadbeater the purest man he had ever met. Annie had come with the two young

men to Australia to try to calm the storms; though she kept thirty-four public engagements in the twenty-four days she was there, she left them uncalmed. Some Theosophical sects broke away from the parent body. An Australian Theosophist whose young son was seduced by Leadbeater opined that Annie was not actually a liar but was 'a foolish, egotistical and misguided woman, who, even if she realized her mistake, was unwilling to retrace her steps.'

From astral Mahatmas she turned back to her problems with India's flesh-and-blood Mahatma, Mohandas Gandhi. Under his leadership, Congress had now voted to back his policy of non-cooperation; Annie publicly dissociated herself from this, declaring that it would lead to riots and bloodshed (as it did). 'The Parting of the Ways' was the title of her *New India* editorial at the beginning of 1921. But Gandhian policies were catching on in a way that Annie's middle-of-the-road proposals never had; so much so, in fact, that in 1922 Gandhi was charged with sedition and sentenced to six years' imprisonment, of which he was actually to serve only two. Annie took advantage of the lull to promote an idea that was temporarily to give her back some of her old influence. Her proposal was that Indian leaders should draft a constitution for their country and have it recognized by Parliament in London, as a further step on the road to self-government. Energetically she set wheels in motion, backing the movement up by a campaign in her newspapers.

The year 1925 was one of crisis for both her projects—the presentation of her young Messiah and of her work for a constitution. Both seemed to be headed for success. The previous year had been a reassuring one; in celebration of her fifty years of public service people had flocked to pay tribute to her, including her generous enemy Gandhi, who wired:



"I wish to express my admiration for this long record of service, and the amazing energy and courage that lay behind it. I cannot forget, though it is many years ago, the inspiration I drew from her in my boyhood and then again in my experiences of political activity.

A London magazine had commented that, "Gandhi's only rival in India is a woman—perhaps the most remarkable of living women." She had every hope then that her Bill on the Indian constitution would be backed both in England and in India. In fact the Bill was presented to Parliament as a private member's measure, went through only one reading, and was indefinitely shelved.

On the Theosophical front, too, everything seemed at first to be going extraordinary well in that year. At the Liberal Catholic headquarters and at the Star camp—supposedly held for Krishnamurti, but he was away nursing his sick brother—there were tremendous developments; members astrally passed their initiations, new priests and bishops were ordained by the Lord Maitreya, and the Masters sent through no end of instructions ranging from the wearing of silk underwear to the provision of twelve apostles for Krishnamurti. He himself, deeply worried about his now dying brother, was so disgusted by these developments that he later had his letters of that period destroyed, as they were so critical of Annie and her fellow members. Outwardly he continued to play his part, even speaking so movingly at the massed convention at Adyar that Annie decided that the World Teacher had indeed descended into his body. "We knew," she wrote, "that the waiting period was over, and that the Morning Star had risen above the horizon, presaging the dawn of a new Day.... We are at the beginning of a New Age, a new civilization." But the young Messiah was storing up all these things—initiations, apostles, bishops, Masters—in his heart.

His talks were getting more and more unorthodox, to the exasperation of seasoned old occultists like Leadbeater. He talked of the futility of sects and dogmas, which Theosophists had relied on for so long, and of the need to think for oneself. "There are going to be no miracles nor strange happenings," he disturbingly declared. To the Masters, the foundation stone of the whole Theosophical enterprise, he made no reference at all. The Liberal Catholic Bishops took counsel, then spoke to Annie; Krishnamurti was obviously being possessed by a Black Magician, they advised, and it was her duty to tell him so. She did, and he offered to stop public speaking altogether. This would have been very awkward indeed and, deeply worried, she had to leave the dilemma unsolved. At the next gathering Krishnamurti caused consternation by joking that he had never been able to read through a Theosophical book in his life. Generously, he was to declare that "What I am saying is for everyone, including the unfortunate Theosophists."

He never lost his affection and respect for his adoptive mother Annie, though. In 1926, tacitly avoiding awkward topics, they spent some time together in California, where Annie bought a large property to accommodate future gatherings (after some hawing over Australians, the Californians had been chosen as the evolving sub-race that Krishnamurti was to lead). They went on to England, and Annie took a group on a lightning tour of Europe to give fifty-six lectures. Everyone but herself was exhausted. Then it was back to India to celebrate her eightieth birthday, and a further round of talks and committee meetings. Her great treat was to dress up in a specially designed uniform and march at the head of 12,000 Indian Boys Scout; back in 1916 she had founded the first Boy Scout organization for non-white boys.

It was in the summer of 1929 that the blow for which Krishnamurti had been preparing his audiences fell at last. He was not thirty-four and Annie Besant a failing, though still formidable, eighty-one. Leadbeater and his other Theosophist teachers were old men. Krishnamurti had reached the point where he could repudiate years of conditioning and show that he thought for himself and decided for himself. He stood up before 3,000 disciples at the Star camp and formally disowned Theosophy and the Order of the Star.

"You are accustomed to authority," he told them; "For eighteen years you have organized, you have looked for someone who would give a new delight to your hearts and minds, who would transform your whole life, who would give you a new understanding; for someone who could raise you to a new plane of life, who would give you a new encouragement, who would set you free—and now look what is happening! Consider, reason with yourselves, and discover in what way that belief has made you different—not with the superficial difference of the wearing of a badge, which is trivial, absurd... In what way are you freer, greater, more dangerous to every Society which is based on the false and the unessential? In what way have the members of this organization of the Star become different? ... You are all depending for your spirituality on someone else, for your happiness on someone else, for your enlightenment on someone else.

Detached now from the Theosophical Society, Krishnamurti was to continue to preach his quietest message of honesty and acceptance (he died only months before the publication of this book). Privately the dyed-in-the-wool Theosophists fumed over him—"the Coming has gone wrong," said Leadbeater—but publicly things were smoothed over under Annie Besant's leadership.

And she, it began to seem, was defying the law of mortality. She still travelled, she still wrote, she still lectured. But gradually she grew frailer and more forgetful, gradually her speeches grew shorter. The *New India* was closed down. She wanted to resign from the Presidency of the Society, she declared, but a message from the Master had forbidden her too. And she would return in a Hindu body in her next life to continue her work for India. When Krishnamurti visited her in 1932 he wrote: "It was really tragic." Her voice had changed like an old woman's, very thin. She recognized me. She said to me, "I am so glad to see you" (two or three times she repeated), "you look so well. I brought you up, didn't I?"

In September 1933, just before her eighty-sixth birthday, Annie Besant died peacefully. Telegrams and letters poured in, the Press printed tributes, the Stock Exchange in Bombay closed for a day and the Hindu University closed down its classrooms. Streets were renamed for her and in Madras a little park was laid out and a statue of her set up.

Annie Besant presents a challenge to our empathy and understanding today. It would be easy to stress only the parts of her career that appeal to us—her feminism, her anti-racism, her struggle for the underdog—and gloss over what we find irrelevant or absurd. But we must take her as a whole, rooted as she was in Victorian religiosity as in Victorian public-spiritedness.

Debunking comes easily enough; of course the life of public service was also a life enabling her to listen to the sound of her own voice a great deal and to organize the lives of others a great deal—activities which she decidedly enjoyed. We are disillusioned enough now to know that nobility and self-sacrifice have their private, selfish sides. She worked ferociously hard—but it was because she had

to, because she was fundamentally not a happy person, because work was her preferred drug. Ironically, the most telling criticism of her way of life comes from her adopted son Krishnamurti, who loved and admired her:

"If we had no belief, what would happen to us? Shouldn't we be very frightened of what might happen to us? If we had no pattern of action, based on a belief—either in God, or in communism, or in socialism, or in imperialism, or in some kind of religious formula, some dogma in which we are conditioned—we should feel utterly lost, shouldn't we? And is not this acceptance of a belief the covering up of that fear—the fear of being really nothing, of being really empty?

"Annie Besant's failings were inextricable from her qualities. She was a deeply loyal person, but this meant that she turned a blind eye to faults once her loyalty was given. She had extraordinary powers of concentration, a kind of tunnel vision regarding the enthusiasm of the moment which enabled her to focus all her energy on it; but this meant a compartmentalism, by which she shut out and denied everything else. She was not vain in any petty sense but her loyalty and single-mindedness went with a very great dislike of admitting herself wrong. And, having taught herself to believe in the visions of her fantasy world, she formed the lazy habit of inventing a supernatural sanction for everything she decided to do."

The strongest attributes of her personally were her astonishing capacity for work, her administrative genius and her sheer guts. But to end there is not enough. These are not the qualities for which people are loved, and she was loved. She had a natural motherliness, and young Indians unselfconsciously called her 'Mother.' She could draw up a constitution for a continent, but she was also good at sitting up all night by sickbeds. She neither

patronized nor toadied, whether she was in a slum or a palace. She had no talent for hating; she talked beautifully; she never blamed or whined or expected gratitude. "A great woman, a strong woman.... a person we cannot forget easily," wrote an Indian colleague on her centenary. It is time to remind ourselves again.

## **CONCLUSION**

The biography of Annie Besant may not give us the feeling of going through a romantic novel. It is filled with anxieties, griefs, yearning hopes, passionate desire for knowledge and truth that throws a ray of hope and peace during the days of our struggle to attain freedom.

Born in Irish family in London, after 46 years she came to India at the fag end of 1893, opted India as her motherland with passionate sympathy for the suffering of the poors like to liberate them from the economic exploitation with her outstanding rhetorics, and organisational skills. In that she spent another forty years of matured life. She was a unique, all in one role-model as a speaker, journalist, political leader, educationist, rationalist, atheist, and a theosophical leader and above all as a humanist in the nineteenth century. She found admirers in Gandhi and Nehru too in their young days about which it has been a beady mentioned in the Introduction Chapter.

Dr. Bhagavan Das, the great scholar Sanskritist like Prof. Chakravarthy, became one of her close associates and colleagues and she came into intimate contact with him.

This is what he says: "In 1910, after her Benares home, Santi Kunj, had been built, she desired to renovate an old temple standing on its grounds which had gone out of repair. Though her religion was Theosophy, which embraces all creeds alike, she desired to Indianise herself in ways of living and appearance as much as possible, so as to get into touch with the heart of the Indian people. Hence her desire to renovate the temple. In connection with this, a small gathering of the foremost Pandits of Benares, and selected few from the whole of India, was invited. When the renowned Pandit Gangadhara Shastri entered and saw her welcoming the guests, he exclaimed (in Sanskrit), "The all white Saraswati," which is one of the designations of the culture Goddess. Dr. Bhagavan Das acted as her Personal Assistant in Benares and on some of the long tours she made in India, year after year, in connection with her work, for some ten years before she made Adyar her principal residence. From 1893 she spent more and more of her time in India and the influence that she exercised on Indians was unique and epoch-making.

One of her great devotees and admirers, Fritz Kunz, speaks of his impressions in 1905 as follows: "Her lectures on the 'Bhagavad Gita' commenced today. An Indian audience then was overwhelmingly masculine, even in the purdah-free South. The hall was charged with people and with expectation. Young and old came from far-off places to hear Mrs. Besant's eloquence released in their own defence. The speaker was then not far, I suppose, from the peak of her powers, and the experience was new to me; that effortless and deceptive speed, the rounded and open-throat quality of voice, a cadence and a rush, a fractional rest, and then a little spate of words culminating in a memorable phrase. The printed verbatim reports of such an art convey very little of the potential communicated to



the audience by the vocal resources. They show, however, that the literary style was not florid. On the contrary, it was in impeccable taste. A few simple thoughts were brought home with emotional power derived from the audience: no mawkishness from the speaker. She was audible to thousands. Yet in private conversation her voice was sometimes almost inaudibly low. Usually she begins a public address at pitch just on the verge of audibility, and this quieted the hearers and brought them towards her, so to speak. But in full flight every word and even the breathings of the final consonants, showered to the farthest reaches of the rapt audience."

Mr. Kaunz's statement in the above paragraph can be collaborated by the experience of many others. A great scholar and skilful parliamentarian, C. Ramalinga Reddy describes Mrs. Besant in these words: Mrs. Besant continued to be a world leader, while those who were born long after she reached her middle age, not merely grew old, but fell into decay. Her entire life is a model of whole-hearted devotion to truth as she found it, of resolute sincerity and courage. She sowed the seeds of self-respect in this land of slaves of government and tradition. Some accused her of rationalising our superstitions, but is not that itself a tribute to her rationalism? In a moving passage she has told us how she visited one of the leaders of the Oxford movement and found him cold and irresponsive. She was never cold, not even to strayed revellers like myself, nor unresponsive. Though Theosophy was her religion, humanity her surging passion. If at a later time in her life she found the peace of heart she was after and that reconciliation between this world and the one beyond, which made a harmonious existence possible for her, in tenets and mysteries of Theosophy. It was not by turning false to her nature but by being more fully true and consistent, and fulfilling it to its

sublime logical climax.

Mr. C.R. Reddy's remarks are particularly valuable because he was not able to see eye to eye with Mrs. Besant in her religious outlook. Likewise Mr. C. Rajagopalachary who observes that as a young man he kept somewhat away from Mrs. Besant, makes the following statement concerning her work in India at this period: "Among those who have materially contributed to the shaping of India Mrs. Besant is one of the biggest personalities. She helped young India to feel sure of the greatness of Indian culture and religion. Both Christianity and Science have made a great and successful attack on Hindu religion. Mrs. Besant's service in repelling these attacks and in conserving the self-confidence of India in these matters deserves most grateful appreciation. Mrs. Besant was one of those who, like Gandhiji, could not be put in a compartment. All things are interrelated and religion, politics, art, industry, education, all are interrelated branches of the same Truth. Mrs. Besant therefore took as much part in politics as in the revival movement of Hinduism. Her contribution to the cause of Indian freedom is great. Lokamanya Tilak, Gandhiji and other Indian leaders were her contemporaries."

It was of great significance that Mrs. Besant was fascinated by India long before she became a theosophist. In 1885, she wrote some tales for children in the "Young Folks Library" and in the first story, "Ganga and the River Maid," she gave a description of India. When Mrs. Besant stepped into the theosophical world, there were only a few books of theosophical literature such as *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine* and *Esoteric Buddhism*. But as Jinarajadasa says: "When Dr. Besant became a theosophist, she did something which nobody else could have done. She took the Truths of Theosophy from these books and presented them in public addresses, full of idealism and beauty. That

is the remarkable gift which she had; she gave beautiful settings for all these wonderful truths. We find her always giving to Theosophical work an aspect which never existed before. I think particularly of one lecture of hers, which I did not hear because I was in America at that time. It was a lecture called 'The Spiritual Life for the Man of the Worked,' delivered at the City Temple; it is impeccable in form, and there could not be a more artistic presentation of a great topic. One can take the lecture, analyse it section by section, and see how the whole subject is presented with a perfect symmetry. She had also delivered a set of lectures entitled 'The Outer Court' and then later 'The Changing World.' All these have an artistic structure, and the second work plans for an ideal united world.

"I think Dr. Besant can be described more as an artist than as a lecturer of the professional type, as she does not survey any subject in its entirety, but gives a definite presentation of it from some one angle which she selects, as a painter does when painting a landscape. While she gives Wisdom, she gives it an exquisite setting. A study in consciousness is the book which is considered the most fascinating among her works. In this book there is a depth of philosophical presentation that will fascinate many a generation to come."



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इस प्रकार कुल मिलाजुला कर करीबन 505 ग्रंथों व लेखों की पलिका डॉ. एनी।



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